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by Matthew Cooper

THE CULTURE OF CAUTION
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by Orlando Patterson

FAMILY OR COUNTRY?
by The Editors

IN WAR AND PEACE

TZ IN JERUSALEM

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

NOVEMBER 27, 1995

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CORRESPONDENCE

Easy and cheap

To the editors:

Robert Wright's "United We Stand" (October 30) is an excellent summary of the value of collective security. This argument is flawed, however, by the common misconception that Western airpower can decisively influence wars with "precision, power and low risk of bodily harm." This belief in precision airstrikes is one of the most dangerous "lessons" of the Gulf war. In attacking Iraq, Coalition air forces operated under ideal circumstances. Air commanders had five months to plan operations while assembling their forces at the superb Saudi airfields. The open terrain of Iraq permitted pilots to locate and destroy many targets without fear of civilian casualties, a situation which is far from true in Bosnia. Despite all these advantages, the Coalition had to conduct a massive ground offensive to expel the aggressor from Kuwait.

JONATHAN M. HOUSE
Griffin, Georgia

To the editors:

In reference to Michael Lind's article on the United Nations ("Twilight of the U.N.," October 30), Lind is wrong to say that Stalin triumphed on the absolute veto. Indeed, President Truman sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow in May 1945 and compelled Stalin to back down on the veto issue. Without Stalin's cave-in, we probably would not have had a United Nations today—which, I gather, would have been fine with Mr. Lind.

STEPHEN SCHLESINGER
New York, New York

Dei bellum

To the editors:

In the fifteen years since I joined Opus Dei I've often had occasion to wonder: Why so much hostility toward this predominantly lay Catholic group I experience as benign and out to hurt nobody and nothing else? Michael Sean Winters's review of *Saints and Schemers: Opus Dei and Its Paradoxes* by Joan Estruch ("The Gospel of Success," October 30) makes me wonder again.

I think I see two reasons. One is that Opus Dei, in commending the unfashionable regimen of Christian asceticism to a permissive age, stands as an implied rebuke to those who've given up on asceticism and want to justify themselves. Hence the allegations of "Pelagianism" cited by Winters. The other reason is that Opus Dei, as everyone including its critics recognizes, really is doctrinally orthodox in Roman Catholic terms, and as such stands as an obstacle to the "New Church" the critics wish to create. Both assaults on Opus Dei are part of a larger struggle for the soul of the Catholic Church—a struggle underway for many years and likely to continue for many more.

RUSSELL SHAW
Washington, D.C.

Dinesh misread

To the editors:

The views of the "Two Dinesh D'Souzas" you have discovered (Notebook, October 30) are, in fact, the views of the same Dinesh D'Souza, four years apart. Shortly after I published *Illiberal Education*, I was invited to participate in the Salmagundi conference on race whose proceedings were published more than three years later, in the fall of 1994. (The reason for the long lead time is not clear to me.) In the meantime, I plunged anew into the topic of racism and published the results of this inquiry in *The End of Racism*, just out this fall. Not surprisingly, I have changed my mind about some things, such as whether the government should outlaw private discrimination based on race. (Incidentally, TNR editor Andrew Sullivan makes a very similar argument for why private discrimination based on sexual orientation should be legal.) So you have not caught me in an inconsistency, but merely charted the evolution of my thinking during the 1990s, and the reasons for the change are fully given in my new book. Yet on many things I have not changed: I remain committed to the goal of a society which transcends the pathology of race, only now I believe that cultural reform that helps to make blacks academically and economically competitive with other groups, rather than laws prosecuting private citizens for entering into free contracts with one another, is the best way to approach the destination of "the end of racism."

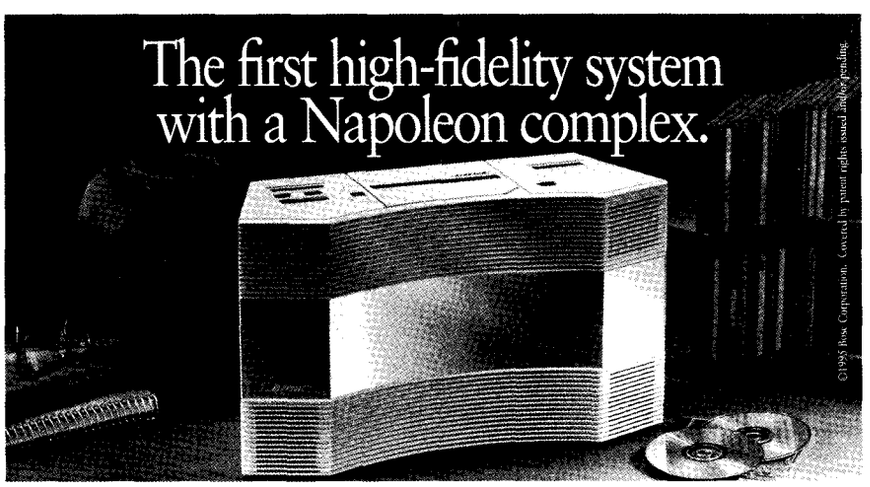
DINESH D'SOUZA
Washington, D.C.

Space over time

To the editors:

Diana Trilling's discussion of the O.J. Simpson trial ("Notes on the Trial of the Century," October 30) queries what happened to quiet, unostentatious respect for the power and dignity of the law. Here is what happened.

In California (and as California goes so goes the nation) during the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the revolution against established authority, the legal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system was declared to be elitist, undemocratic and too expensive and inaccessible to the general population. In the mood of the times, several things happened. The first was the removal of the ban on advertising by lawyers. The second was a loosening of the strict authority of the State Bar of California to control lawyer (and judge) behavior. The results were swift in coming: competitive advertising, ambulance chasing in its broadest sense, confrontational and uncivil behavior by lawyers in and out of the courtroom, less control of courtroom behavior by judges. That is what we are reaping.

MARJORIE W. EVANS
Los Altos, California

To the editors:

In comparing O.J. Simpson's trial to Jean Harris's Diana Trilling bemoans the decline in legal decorousness and discourse over the last fourteen years. With all due respect (and it is great) and at the conceptual risk of privileging space over time, I suggest that the 3,000 miles from White Plains to Los Angeles may have more bearing on the matter. Halfway between Brentwood and downtown lies the Cape Canaveral of fantasy. If this trial had taken place in any other city would it have had such a zany demeanor? I strongly doubt it. If the Simpson trial teaches us nothing else, surely it must remind us that such trials teach us nothing.

THOMAS FRICK
Los Angeles, California

Semper?

To the editors:

There are small errors in Daphne Barak and Richard Gooding's "Semper Fidel?" (October 30). They include: the name of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Investment who is Raul Taladrid not Roberto Talarid; Castro calls his Foreign Minister Robaina "Robertico," not Roberto Tico Robaino; the spelling of Castro's brother's name Raul; and the details of Robert Vesco's arrest. Vesco was taken to the dreaded prison Villa Marista, not Santa Maria, which is a beach resort outside of Havana. Also, many Cubans *did* hear about Vesco's arrest as CNN, Christian Science Radio and Radio Marti are *in fact* easily accessible in Cuba. These are regrettable gaffes, particularly as the writers' overall point that U.S. policy toward Cuba is hopelessly outdated is correct.

ANN LOUISE BARDACH
Santa Barbara, California

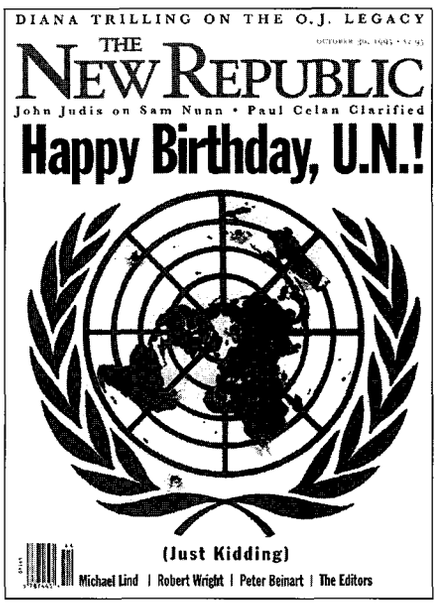
Tank warfare

To the editors:

Your August 14 issue included an article by Michael Lind in which he referred to Newt Gingrich and "his own corporate-funded think tank (the Progress and Freedom Foundation)." Because this implies that Mr. Gingrich somehow dominates or controls the Progress and Freedom Foundation, it is erroneous, misleading and potentially damaging.

The Progress and Freedom Foundation is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan "think tank" established in 1993. As a tax-exempt charitable and educational organization, the Foundation cannot and does not help, endorse or otherwise advance the interests of any political candidate or party.

Mr. Gingrich's relationship to the Foundation is not ambiguous. While the Foundation is proud of its association with him, he is not and never has been a


DIANA TRILLING ON THE O.J. LEGACY
THE NEW REPUBLIC
John Judis on Sam Nunn • Paul Celan Clarified
Happy Birthday, U.N.!
(Just Kidding)
Michael Lind | Robert Wright | Peter Beinart | The Editors

board member, officer or employee. He did not take part in the decisionmaking process to establish the Foundation and has never played a role in directing or managing it. In 1994 and 1995, the Foundation, under a contract with Reinhardt College, helped to produce and distribute video tapes and other materials associated with Mr. Gingrich's college course, and Mr. Gingrich has served as a co-host on the Foundation's national television program, "The Progress Report."

The Progress and Freedom Foundation is a "full-service" think tank, which has a point of view that is, indeed, much closer to the progressive conservatism of Mr. Gingrich than to the neo-Luddite isolationism championed by Mr. Lind. But our ideas are no more the property of Gingrich than Mr. Lind's are the property of Buchanan.

JEFFREY A. EISENACH
President, The Progress and Freedom Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Michael Lind replies:

Compare my characterization of the Progress and Freedom Foundation to the following: "At Gingrich's Progress and Freedom Foundation, [Arianna] Huffington ... is taken very seriously." (*Time*, November 6, 1995.) "[T]he Progress and Freedom Foundation (generally regarded as Newt Gingrich's think-tank)..." [Daniel Burstein and David Kline, *Road Warriors: Dreams and Nightmares Along the Information Highway* (Dutton, 1995.)] Coincidence? Or conspiracy?

Yankee doodles

To the editors:

I regret to say that David Greenberg, your Yankee Stadium reporter, ("Yankee, Stay Home," October 30) must be new to the New York game. While correctly disputing the myth of its surrounding neighborhood as too dangerous for outsiders, he seems not to know that in the past few years the cost of general admission tickets has risen from $7.50 to $11.50. That escalates the cost of going to a game from a price competitive with a movie to one that isn't. No wonder many previous customers decide against going to the stadium.

Most of us would think that anyone raising prices so precipitously in an economic slump was either a fool or a schemer. The scheme here is using self-induced lower attendance as a rationale for deserving public funds; only fools would accept Steinbrenner's account of declining attendance.

What marks Steinbrenner's regime as the Yankee chief is financial success coupled with chronic baseball failure. There is no owner in baseball so predisposed to shoot his team in the feet—to fire managers peremptorily, often (as recently) replacing successful ones with less successful; to hire expensive players the team doesn't need; to sabotage morale, etc. As a libertarian, I'm generally opposed to government ownership; but as a lifetime Yankee fan I'll make an exception.

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ
New York, New York

To the editors:

David Greenberg's mistake in calling Walton Avenue in the Bronx Walton Street is understandable, and the kind of thing only an ex-Bronxite would pick up.

But the spelling of Scorsese! (It's not Scorcese.) He's not exactly a street near Yankee Stadium. Lots of people misspell it that way, but you'd think that between Greenberg and your copy editor....

LEONARD HARRIS
New York, New York

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FROM WASHINGTON

Amir American

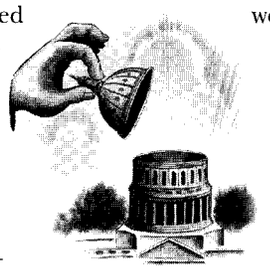
The analogizing of Yitzhak Rabin's murder began even before his stark and moving funeral ended. Was this Israel's Kennedy assassination? Israel's Lincoln assassination? Perhaps this is Israel's Oklahoma City. Israelis weeping in the streets of Tel Aviv seem stricken by the same compound horror as Americans were when we discovered not only that the heartland was vulnerable to terrorism (Israelis knew this all too well) but that the attack came from within.

Our alleged bomber was Tim McVeigh, Gulf veteran, Bronze Star winner. Israel's assassin was Yigal Amir, veteran of the Golani Brigade. The right-wing ultras we, and the Israelis, took too lightly for too long mean business after all, and they enjoy a disturbing measure of toleration in the broader right-wing public. Almost as stunning as the Oklahoma bombing itself was that some Americans saw McVeigh's act as an extreme but understandable response to federal provocations. Israeli rightists are muttering similar apologies. Amir is "a *righteous man*," said one West Bank settler on "Nightline."

Like America's Republican right in the wake of Oklahoma City, Israel's conservative Likud opposition, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, stands accused of "creating a climate" that emboldened the crazies. Distinctions must be made. Newt Gingrich and Rush Limbaugh never openly endorsed the militias, their violence or the worst ravings of the American gun lobby. But nor were such people cast out of the Republican revolution. Netanyahu refused to label Rabin a murderer, a traitor or a Nazi. But in its own battle to stop the Rabin government's land-for-peace deal, Likud, too, pursued a policy of no enemies, or precious few, on the right. Religious and nationalist extremists swelled Likud rallies. Netanyahu apparently thought their passion could be contained and bent to his purpose—namely, to unseat Rabin in the next election.

As it happens, he capitalized on Oklahoma City by publishing a book in the United States titled, somewhat repetitively, *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Domestic and International Terrorism.* The book voices (valid) alarm about Islamic fundamentalists and unreconstructed elements in the PLO. In the knowing tones of a veteran imparting his wisdom to a people just waking up to the threat, Netanyahu advises the United States on how to deal with "domestic terrorism." But there is scant indication that this expert realized domestic right-wing terror might be incubating within Israel, too.

Nor did Netanyahu himself draw a careful distinction between those who actually commit terror and those who allegedly create the climate for it. According to Netanyahu, it was Rabin's government that, by trying to trade land for peace, "directly encouraged and emboldened a renewed rash of Islamic terrorism under the PLO umbrella"; "tied the hands of the security forces"; and even "armed the [Arab] terrorists" by supposedly permitting a free flow of guns to the Gaza Strip. And Netanyahu claimed: "[I]f hitherto Israel had shown the world how terrorism could be fought, now it showed how terrorism could be facilitated." At his arraignment, Yigal Amir closely echoed these extraordinary insinuations, charging that Rabin's government "brought on all the terrorist attacks."



Netanyahu, of all people, should have known better. His book is actually quite nuanced and commonsensical, if predictably hard-line, on the question of how a democracy can protect civil liberties while acting against terrorists who seek to exploit those freedoms. Any democracy's first line of defense, Netanyahu wrote, is its political culture: "The salient point that has to be underlined again and again is that *nothing* justifies terrorism—that it is evil *per se*...." Political leaders must continually educate the public on the difference between legitimate dissent and the other kind. Terror must be given "no intellectual quarter." But the second line of defense is, and must be, "operational": tough law enforcement, including greater latitude to eavesdrop on, and infiltrate, potentially violent groups.

On both counts, Netanyahu was right. And on both counts, the United States' own response to the Oklahoma City enormity has flagged. What once seemed genuine national introspection about the inflammatory tone and content of public discourse shows signs of fading amid the hyperbole and polarization of the presidential campaign. (See, for example, the press conference at which conservative activists lined up to label Colin Powell a liberal menace to their revolution.) Capitol Hill Republicans, appeasing the ultra-right, hosted hearings for camouflage-clad militiamen. In alliance with civil libertarians, they stopped President Clinton's relatively mild anti-terrorism legislation.

As the initial unifying grief surrounding the murder of Rabin gradually gives way to Israel's own election campaign, watch Netanyahu and his fellow nationalist conservatives. Netanyahu immediately promised to support Peres's accession to the prime ministership. The government, he said, can be changed only by ballots, not by bullets. That strengthens the first line of defense—political culture—which the Israeli right had hitherto done its bit to weaken.

But the right must also join Peres in defining the threat of domestic terrorism and in helping "crush" the ultras, as Interior Minister Ehud Barak has promised to do. The battle plan for such a crackdown could come from the pages of Netanyahu's own book. One step, "freez[ing] the financial assets in the West of terrorist regimes and organizations," has already been taken. At Israel's request President Clinton froze the assets of two far-right Jewish groups in the U.S. last January. But Netanyahu also called for "outlaw[ing] fundraising and channeling of funds to terrorist groups." He advocated "tighten[ing] immigration laws,... coupled with the threat of deportation," which, applied to Israel, might mean modifying the Law of Return to screen out Jewish extremists. "The continued existence in the United States of heavily armed anti-government militias numbering thousands of members is a grotesque distortion of the idea of civil freedom," Netanyahu wrote, calling for stricter regulation of gun ownership. Shouldn't a similar standard apply to the (smaller) Israeli paramilitary groups?

Netanyahu argued that any democracy's basic advantage against terrorism is the patriotism and ingrained aversion to political violence of its citizens. Terrorists therefore cannot swim easily among the sea of the people. Confined to a few "puddles" of popular support, they remain small and isolated and can be mopped up with relative ease. Only "in the absence of forceful action by the government," he wrote, could such puddles "get larger and deeper." Netanyahu was referring to the United States, but, sadly, his analysis now applies to Israel.

CHARLES LANE

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 27, 1995

FAMILY OR COUNTRY?

The gracefulness of Colin Powell's announcement that he will not run for president demonstrated once again the attractive personality that had led so many to wish so fervently that he would run. Neither Powell nor his wife, Alma, took the easy way out. They declined to chalk up their decision to fears about his security—though no one, post-Rabin, would have blamed them if they did. Nor did Powell take the opportunity, as he could have, to express disdain for the political process; rather, he saluted the candidates who are willing to endure the "down and dirty."

The most significant result of the Powell announcement was his coming out—at last—as a Republican. Until now, no other black American of his stature had pledged allegiance to the party of Gingrich. Powell made clear his was not an unconditional affiliation, but that was the beauty of it. As Powell himself noted, for too long blacks have been imposing limits on their own political influence by their unconditional alliance with the Democrats. His step will encourage competition for black votes between the parties, in two ways. First, it paves the way for other blacks to challenge the Democratic monopoly—and to work for a more broadly based Republican Party. And second, with Powell inside their tent, Republicans have even less reason, and excuse, to keep writing off black votes and black interests. Both these developments are unqualified goods.

But Powell's announcement was not truly a surprise. In the end, his refusal to run was utterly in character for a man who has spent his entire adult life as a cautious protector of conservative institutions—and of his own hard-won Army career advancements. Just as he reluctantly helped kick Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, then balked at a broader campaign to destroy Iraq's Republican Guard, so he settled for the role of America's most prominent black Republican private citizen rather than reach for the greater, but riskier, prize of the White House itself. Having looked "deep within my soul," he couldn't find the "commitment and passion" such a crusade would have required.

There is a lesson here for those who wishfully glossed over the signs that Colin Powell, Army lifer, could not so easily become Colin Powell, presidential candidate. Some of the motivations underlying the Powell boomlet were sound—a Powell run would loosen the religious right's grip on the GOP, it would be a symbolic racial breakthrough, it's always good to expand the choices in a democratic system. (See "Run, Colin, Run!" TNR, November 20.) But too many Powellmaniacs saw the general as a panacea for all of America's most vexing problems, from Medicare to racial division.

Well, Powell may be a leader, but, as is now clear, he's not that kind of a leader. Even at his press conference, he continued to mouth the platitudinous notion that he was for the Republican revolution but wanted it to be more humane. Wouldn't we all? But the difficult decisions about welfare reform, Medicare cuts and budget-balancing could be left to other mortals. In this, Powell did not represent a step forward but a treading in soothingly warm water. Newt Gingrich may be more grating; but, when it comes to declaring on the tough issues, he is also more honest.

Powell decided his family was more important to him than the presidency. Their privacy could not be "sacrificed" to the rigors of the race. This is understandable, but it also underscores a basic contradiction, both in Powell's conception of the country and in the case for a Powell candidacy. He likened America to a family and expressed a desire to make society as cohesive as a combat unit. Many believed he could be the father, the commander, to make it happen. But a federal nation of 260 million is not, and never can be, as harmonious as a happy family or a victorious army. The Founders gave us a government of checks and balances precisely to restrain and orchestrate the competing, often venal interests that inevitably arise in a complex country populated by citizens—not brothers and sisters.

For better or worse, democracy is a system meant to be operated—led—by people who agree to give up a certain amount of privacy and family warmth in exchange for the burdens and rewards of public life. Such people are called politicians. "Politician" is a dirty word in America these days. But surely one lesson of politician Yitzhak Rabin's sacrifice is how necessary it is that there be men and women to whom we can entrust decision-making authority—who are willing to venture out of the bosom of their families and into the public square. Powell never wanted to make that choice, and he was honest enough to admit it. But it is that choice with which true political leadership begins, and which makes a democratic polity possible. •

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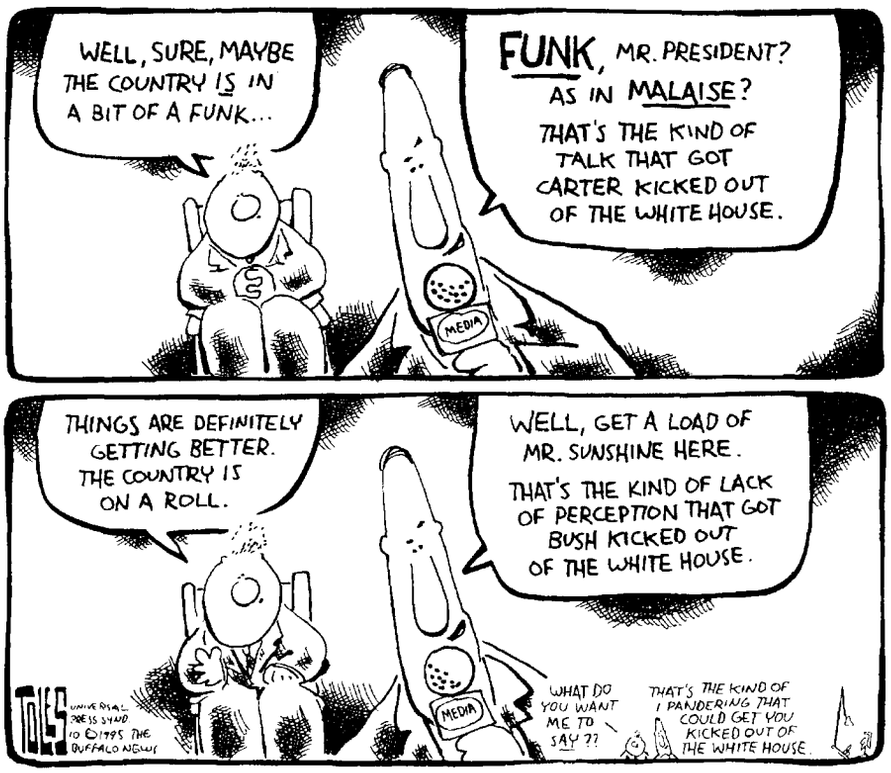
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: The late Chief Justice Warren Burger left an inadequate three-sentence will, which could cost his heirs thousands of dollars in taxes.... During a House Republican appearance with zoo animals, a baby cougar drew blood from Speaker Newt Gingrich's face.... The first news reports of a congressional hearing on English as the U.S.'s primary language were reported by Reuters in Spanish.... After Senator David Pryor compared a new loophole for drug companies to finding money while "walking home from school some day on the railroad track," the chief of the Federal Railroad Administration chided his "tacit approval, if not encouragement, of young students trespassing along railroad rights of way." ... A new federal government workbook, titled *About Understanding Diversity*, includes tips such as, "Find out if David Harris prefers to be called 'Mr. Harris,' 'David,' or 'Dave.'" ... The USDA approved meat inspection labels for ostriches.... A New Hampshire AFL-CIO election publication concluded, "Drive home safely, and remember: If you must drink and drive, try to do it when Phil Gramm is crossing the street."


WELL, SURE, MAYBE THE COUNTRY IS IN A BIT OF A FUNK...
FUNK, MR. PRESIDENT? AS IN MALAISE?
THAT'S THE KIND OF TALK THAT GOT CARTER KICKED OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE.
MEDIA
THINGS ARE DEFINITELY GETTING BETTER. THE COUNTRY IS ON A ROLL.
WELL, GET A LOAD OF MR. SUNSHINE HERE.
THAT'S THE KIND OF LACK OF PERCEPTION THAT GOT BUSH KICKED OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE.
MEDIA
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY??
THAT'S THE KIND OF I PANDERING THAT COULD GET YOU KICKED OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE.
TOLES
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYND TO ©1995 THE BUFFALO NEWS

THE TRIUMPH OF POLITICS: Off-year elections are generally a dull affair, but there's reason to take note of this year's returns. Throughout the country, Democrats ran rather well. They ran against those who excoriate the proper role of government; and they made their case well. In Virginia, Democrats took on the commonwealth's governor, George Allen, a self-styled Gingrichite, and prevented a long-expected GOP takeover of the legislature. The rabidly right Kirk Fordice held on to the governorship of Mississippi, despite an honorable campaign by Dick Molpus to bring blacks and whites together. Still, Democrats actually picked up seats in the Mississippi Statehouse as they did in Christie Todd Whitman's backyard in New Jersey. In Kentucky, a Democrat took the governor's race after specifically urging the Bluegrass State to send a message to Newt Gingrich. All of this leads to one inescapable conclusion: politics is very much alive. Nowhere is that more true than in Maine, where voters rejected an anti-gay rights initiative. Flinty New Englanders may not be ready to embrace gay rights, but they were no more ready to shut down the debate on gay rights at the beck and call of an aggressive and narrow-minded religious right. Democrats should not deduce from this that they can relax—or, worse, return to paleoliberalism. But, rather, that Republican extremism may have reached its high-water mark. And that is very good news.

OUT BUT NOT DOWN: One of the most encouraging aspects of Colin Powell's press conference was his matter-of-fact reference to his wife's depression. He was admirably forthright about it, comparing it with his own blood pressure, and bravely destigmatizing it. Chemical depression is not something within anyone's control; and certainly it is not something anyone should be ashamed of or silent about. Although its treatment is never as simple as mere pill-popping, Powell's medicalization of the issue was a breakthrough in our public discourse on the matter. It makes you long for his calming and sane presence in other, equally contentious areas.

BASKET CASE: San Francisco's mayoral race is now down to a run-off between the incumbent Frank Jordan and ex-Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, who has used up his term limits in state office. Though Brown is certainly entertaining, we hope our West Coast friends will choose to do without his bomb-throwing, race-trumping ways. In his latest caper, Brown told a group of California State-Hayward students how to treat the author of the California Civil Rights Initiative: "You ought to enroll in his class, and believe me if you treat him correctly ... by the end of the session he should really need therapy.... You ought to do what you do best to

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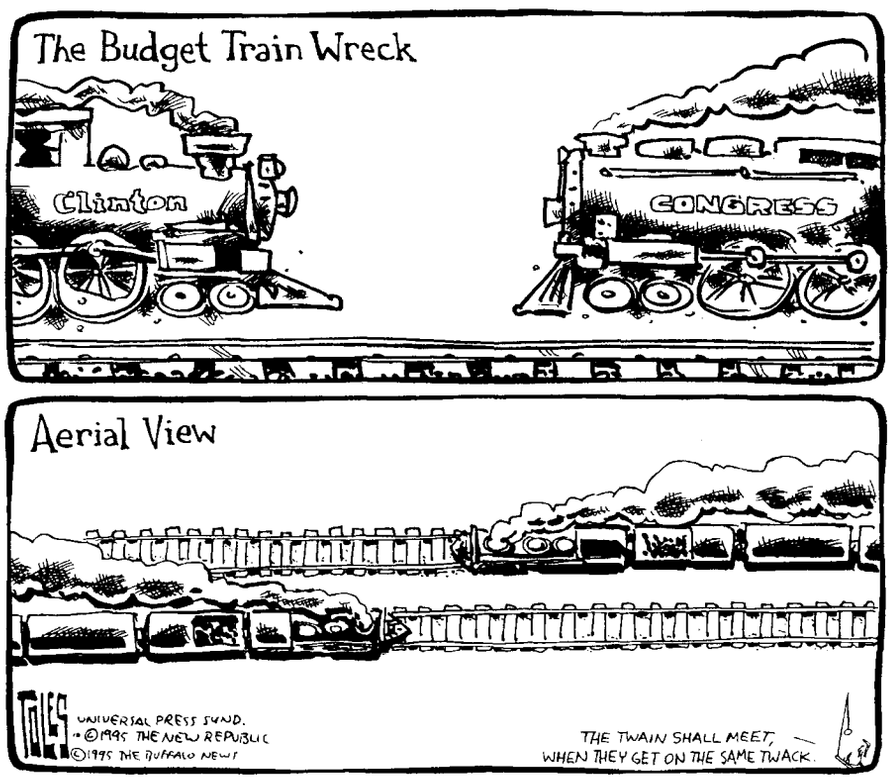
terrorize professors you don't like, and I guarantee he will be a basket case by the end of the term." Willie, ever heard of voting?

LEFT HOOK: Bob Dole's hard tack to the right over the past months has made it difficult for presidential foes Phil Gramm and Pat Buchanan to make headway with the party's conservative flank. So last week they tried a new tactic: attacking him from the left. Seizing on Dole's admission that he opposed Medicare in 1965, Gramm accused Dole of being "outside the mainstream of conservative Republican philosophy on Medicare." Buchanan, meanwhile, launched a series of radio advertisements criticizing Congress for cutting Medicare. Gramm's sudden embrace of moderation made Dole's earlier flip-flops look almost graceful. For Buchanan, however, paleoliberal positioning is now almost a habit. In a recent op-ed defending protectionism, he quoted a writer citing the destructive effects of free trade. The source? Karl Marx. At last, a candidate for the Old Left.



GOLD INTO STRAW: The GOP presidential candidates pride themselves on their hard-headed thrift. But so far campaign finance documents suggest otherwise. For Phil Gramm, whose tie with Bob Dole made him the Iowa straw poll's winner, victory didn't come cheap. A good estimate is that between July and September he spent roughly $500,000 in Iowa, or $194 per straw poll vote. Others were just as profligate. Lamar Alexander spent more than $4,000 on streamers and other goodies at the Party Time store in Des Moines and another $1,500 at Balloons Unlimited. And Buchanan's shoestring campaign dished out more than $300 on the day of the straw poll at a local golf course. How the afternoon on the links empowered working Americans besieged by parasitic aliens and capitalist greed, the Buchananites didn't specify.

TAKING THE FIRST: Last week, Congress was treated to a morning invocation from the Reverend Lou Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition, whose recommendations for restoring public decency include quarantining people with AIDS in internment camps. Brushing aside outrage over the invitation, Newt Gingrich's press secretary, Tony Blankley, argued, "We are rather fond of the First Amendment here, and there have been thousands of men and women of the cloth who have given the morning devotionals and they may have had different thoughts, but the First Amendment permits them to have thoughts and even to express them." Blankley's invocation of the First Amendment is about as persuasive as liberals' use of it in defending the NEA. A bigot doesn't have a First Amendment right to address Congress, any more than Karen Findley has a First Amendment right to get government money to insert vegetables into her orifices. The week before, Newt took a different tack. After White House press secretary Mike McCurry jokingly accused Gingrich of wishing that seniors "just die and go away," the Speaker demanded he be fired. No First Amendment issue there, Newt, right?

BREAKING NEWS:

Life bleak for men in chains

—*The Tennessean*, October 22.

Malls try to attract shoppers

—*The Baltimore Sun*, October 30.

(Thanks to Paul Holzapfel of Nashville, Tennessee, and Hal Riedl of Baltimore, Maryland.)

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ON THE HILL

MISTOOK ISTOOK

By Michael Crowley

Pat Robertson thinks it "may be the most important piece of legislation in this session." Clarence Thomas's wife, Virginia, an aide to House Majority Leader Dick Armey, has quietly helped to steer it through the legislative process. A critical mass of freshman Republicans are threatening to hold the federal budget hostage for the sake of it. A crucial reform of runaway entitlements? In fact, it's a petty piece of ideological get-back that could strike a serious blow against civil liberties.

It's called the Istook amendment; and it would cut off federal funding to any organization that spent too much of its own money on what is vaguely called "political advocacy." The nonprofits that could be affected range from Planned Parenthood to the Sierra Club to the Girl Scouts. What most have in common is that they promote views perceived by Republicans as leftist. The problems with the amendment start with the definition of the term "political advocacy." It could mean attempts to influence a legislative or judicial decision at any level of government, including appeals to public opinion by "carrying on propaganda." As read by many experts, that could encompass almost anything beyond tuning in to NPR: from outright lobbying to supporting a political campaign or writing a letter to the editor.

Grant recipients would have to file annual reports to the federal government detailing their political activities, which would then be tallied up in a Census Bureau computer and made public on the Internet—a strange idea coming from the paranoid-of-government crowd. Under the amendment, even doing business with an organization or individual who spends more than 15 percent of private funds on political advocacy could lose you your funding. Thus, the Boy Scouts might manage their finances carefully enough to stay within the law, but if they unwittingly buy Scout uniforms from a company with big lobbying expenses, they're in trouble. And a peculiar "bounty hunter" provision would allow private citizens to sue those suspected of doling out too much on political advocacy—and keep a share of any settlement. The amendment, in other words, is bait for a liberal-hunt for Republican activists.

For ideological Republicans, the beauty of the amendment is its capacity to silence mouthpieces that happen to oppose Medicare reform and other Contract with America proposals while displaying their commitment to frugality. Newt Gingrich's avowed support for the proposal seemed to have solidified shortly after the National Council of Senior Citizens, a recipient of generous congressional grants, launched an aggressive ad campaign opposing Gingrich's Medicare reform plan. There are currents of opposition to it within the Republican Party—Senate moderates like James Jeffords of Vermont and Mark Hatfield of Oregon are uncomfortable with its scope and its restrictions on free speech, but they may be no match for the House's freshmen, who are determined to attach the Istook amendment to legislation, particularly related to the budget, that absolutely must pass. It has already stalled vital appropriations bills that fund federal agencies like the Treasury and the Labor Department. And, at press time, Republicans were also hooking the Istook amendment to a "continuing resolution" vote to keep the government running in the absence of a budget agreement. Even if one or more of these gambits should fail, however, dozens of freshmen are threatening to withhold their votes on a final budget resolution unless the Istook amendment becomes law.

Indiana's David McIntosh, an anti-regulation zealot who recently hauled several nonprofits, including the YMCA and the Grant-A-Wish Foundation before his subcommittee, says he's simply trying to "root out one of Washington's best-kept little secrets: welfare for lobbyists." But it's already illegal to use government funds for lobbying. The Office of Management and Budget prohibits doing so with grant dollars, and even the tax-exempt organizations who do not receive grants are limited in their lobbying—a principle the Supreme Court upheld in 1983. What this amendment would do is monitor a nonprofit's use of its *private* money simply because some of its other funds come from the federal government—and this puts it on shaky constitutional ground.

Anticipating such an objection, Armey has vowed that the Istook amendment "represents the best work of the best legal minds on this subject." But the defensive legal opinion commissioned by the bill's sponsors is opposed by many formidable legal minds, as well as the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service. Two recent Supreme Court rulings shape their reasoning. In its 1991 *Rust* v. *Sullivan* decision, the Court upheld the government's right to place a "gag rule" on federally funded family planning clinics, forbidding them from providing abortion counseling. By limiting the service—and not the recipient of federal money—the Court ruled that the law was not what is called an "unconstitutional condition" on government assistance. Here, as the Court wrote, "the government is not denying a benefit to anyone, but is instead simply insisting that public funds be spent for the purposes for which they were authorized." The Istook amendment, on the other hand, crosses that line by limiting recipient organizations as a whole.

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In its 1984 *FCC* v. *League of Women Voters of California* decision, the Court offered an interpretation even more at odds with the Istook amendment, ruling that the government could not prevent public television stations from editorializing simply on the grounds that they receive federal money. *FCC* is the more applicable precedent since it specifically addresses restrictions on the use of private funds—and rejects limits. "The government can't take away your rights with carrots any more than with sticks," explains Stanford law professor Kathleen Sullivan. "The government can't bribe you."

Common sense, too, would suggest that the Constitution should not allow such a limit. While it's true, as Istook and McIntosh argue, that grant money is fungible and can facilitate lobbying even if it is not directly allocated for that purpose, where would you draw the line? "In this age when the government is 20 percent of the economy," says Eugene Volokh, a UCLA law professor, "if we allow government to control people's actions based on anything it gives them, you could control anything."

In the end, though, the most telling thing about the Istook amendment is who its penny-wise sponsors left out. Republicans shot down Democratic proposals to include defense contractors, whose existence depends on federal dollars and who are not at all shy about lobbying. Also exempted are tax-exempt nonprofits which, like the Christian Coalition and the Heritage Foundation, tend to be friendlier on the whole to Republicans but still cost the government billions in lost revenue. Why exclude them? "There are so many approaches you can discuss," an Istook aide offers. Still, in their war against lobbyists, the Republicans have been curiously selective. As Gary Bass of OMB Watch, a group opposing the amendment, puts it, "When most people talk about special interests, they think about tobacco companies and the powerful oil lobbies—not the Girl Scouts." •

A normal man and a normal country.

ISREALITY

By Leon Wieseltier

Will *this* do? Will the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin make us see the fire that is burning in our midst? By us, I mean the Jews, and not only the Jews in Israel. I hear Jews say that their hearts have been broken; but let us be clear that this was no ordinary variety of heartbreak. It was owed not to the news that Rabin was dead (I do not recall almost a single conversation about the historical transformations of the last two years that did not end with anxious mutterings about his smoking and drinking) or to the news that Rabin was killed (he lived dangerously). No, it was the news that Rabin was killed by a Jew, and killed by a Jew because he was making peace, that broke our hearts.

By a Jew, and for peace: those are facts that throw every son and daughter of Israel who is not beyond the reach of decency into a condition of crisis. But we must not wear ourselves out with emotion, because there is work to be done. This is not a time for healing, this is a time for reckoning. Healing is almost always a sham, a sentimental averting of the gaze, a denial of conflict, a medical metaphor that politicians use for the temporary suspension of the ugly truth; and the ugly truth, in this instance, is that there is a community of Jews, in Israel and in America, who are beyond the reach of decency. I do not want to "come together" with this community. I want to curse it, to fight it, to demonstrate, intellectually and politically, that it represents a disfigured Judaism, a disfigured Zionism, a disfigured humanity. I do not want to "come together" with the rabbi from Brooklyn who made a name for himself a few months ago when he ruled that the murder of Yitzhak Rabin is permitted by Jewish law. I want this rabbi to wander the streets and the synagogues in search of a place, a Jewish place, where his shame will not be known, and I want him never to find it. He despises peace, so let him have none.

The more we learn about the man who assassinated Rabin, the more familiar he becomes. God, a gun, an illegal new settlement in "Samaria" (he called it "the most holy land" and hitchhiked there daily from his classes in law), a small, ultra-nationalist sect for which peace is treason and war is all there is: this man was the perfect product of the chauvinist culture of the Israeli right. Now the forces that created or tolerated this monster will protest their innocence of his crime, and take umbrage at the insinuation. "Already there is a blood libel," a former adviser to Yitzhak Shamir said. "Whoever had a word of criticism against the peace process, it's as if he murdered Rabin."

A blood libel! There, in the language, is the inflammation. But it was not a man of the left who shot the prime minister of Israel, and it was not a Palestinian. So let us have a bit of blood libel. It is true that only the person who pulled the trigger is guilty; but there is guilt and there is responsibility, and the responsibility for the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin is not the assassin's alone. I do not mean to say that those who opposed Rabin's policies are the ones who are responsible. Opposition is their duty. The ones who are responsible are those who promoted opposition into God's word, and found virtue in violence, and made excuses for extremism, and identified the threat with the Other (if the Palestinians are the terrorists, why was the prime minister of Israel slain by the son of a Jewish scribe?)—all the politicians and the rabbis and

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the pundits for whom the racism and the terrorism of Jews is merely a tactical mistake, an error in the right direction, an excess of the love of Israel.

"I pray that we learn to maintain restraint and unity," Benjamin Netanyahu sagely told reporters the day after the murder. This is the same Netanyahu who last month presided over a rally of his party at which a huge effigy of Rabin in a Nazi uniform was raised, and said nothing. Restraint and unity? He is making a tasteless joke. For years the Likud, along with the settlers' movement, has been destroying unity and winking at the collapse of restraint, as a matter of political strategy. *Ha'am lo khatam*: "the nation did not sign" was the Likud's slogan of the last two years, referring to the accords with the PLO. The implication was that only the government signed. The Israeli right does not merely disagree with the government. It delegitimates the government with which it disagrees. It practices the politics of incitement, and then it complains about guilt by association.

Whence this fear of peace, in a people instructed to pursue peace? It is not, of course, an altogether irrational fear. The Jews were instructed not only to pursue peace, they were instructed also to defend themselves. The one who comes to kill you—kill him first, the tradition teaches; and many came to kill Jews, and many who came to Jews were not killed first. There is a foundation in reality for a suspicion of old enemies. But it is important to understand that a foundation in reality is not an immutable foundation. The appeal to reality, after all, is an appeal to evidence; and there is evidence that Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinians, the Arab states in the Gulf, for their different reasons and in their different degrees, want peace.

Victims do not have much in the way of armor, but they do have their low expectations of the world. Their pessimism is a precious possession. It is a spiritual protection. They cannot be expected to surrender it swiftly. But it is also a constriction of their imagination. They have trouble imagining that victims, too, are agents of history, who affect their own destiny and the destiny of others. We are, all of us, our Other's Other. The fearing are also the feared. This paradox is especially hard for Israelis to entertain, since they have had so much to fear. Their own vulnerability to Palestinians often blinds them to the vulnerability of Palestinians to them. It is confusing to feel at the same time powerless and powerful. There is a Jewish joke about a man who finds a million dollars and decides to return it because he worries that a poor man may have lost it. If a rich man is just a poor man with riches, then a strong man is just a weak man with strength. This is why Israelis are always a little surprised by the consequences of their own power. They are jarred by the suggestion that there is blood on their hands, too, when this is an assertion of fact, a banality of struggle. A just war is not the same thing as an innocent war. Yitzhak Rabin owed some of his moral authority to his natural acceptance of the consequences of power. He had no interest in innocence, which is why he had no fear of peace.

And that was his offense to the political culture that called him a traitor, that produced the man who cut him down. Yitzhak Rabin was a great anti-apocalyptic. He did not lead his people to war apocalyptically and he did not lead his people to peace apocalyptically. (The same cannot be said of Shimon Peres, whose utopianism about peace in the Middle East makes many of his countrymen uneasy.) He was not a visionary. He was, almost to a fault, a normal man. And normality, the great ideal of classical Zionism, is what romantic Zionism, the Zionism of the settlers and the pietists and the jingoists, scorns. They do not appeal to reality; they appeal to eternity, and to an historical fixity in which the fate of the Jews is unchanging, and is a fate of war, in which there are only enemies, or the same enemies with different names, and peace is an illusion, an expression of self-loathing, a trick of the devil, an apostasy. They admit no evidence against their fever. They find no grandeur in ordinary, unbesieged life. And Rabin was declaring that the siege was over. He was smashing their picture of the world.

If proof is still needed that Rabin was right, that the siege is over, his funeral is the proof. There, among the mourners, before the bier draped in the flag of the Jewish state, a few yards from the tomb of the author of *The Jewish State*, sat the eternal enemies of the Jews: Jordanians, Egyptians, Palestinians, Omanis, Qattaris. The King of Jordan rose in his red *kaffiyeh* and spoke words that ennobled all who heard them. He made the opposition to the new dispensation seem so small. CNN's camera caught Netanyahu fidgeting a few rows back. His rival was dead, but he had lost. He had promised that peace was not possible, and then he had promised that peace was not real; but in every house and every office in his country it was plain that he was wrong, that peace was possible and peace was real. And they lowered Rabin into the ground.

The irreversibility of Rabin's death puts one in mind of the irreversibility of his life. The creation of Israel, the security of Israel, the peace of Israel: Who any longer thinks that these are experiments and dreams, efforts that may or may not fail, ideas and institutions still struggling to be born? Translating the words of one of Rabin's associates, the CNN translator awkwardly rendered "Israeliness" as "Israelity," and then beautifully pronounced "Israelity" as "Isreality." This is a country, I thought, that is easily wounded, but it is fundamentally indestructible. Yitzhak Rabin knew this. The Arab leaders on Mount Herzl knew this. Only the land-grabbing, trigger-happy saints of the right do not know this. They are animated by the imagination of catastrophe, by the thrill of attending the end. Soon they will take their place among the great losers of Jewish history, and invent theologies to explain how it was that their people, and their God, disappointed them. But not until they really are crushed. •

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Monopolies Win, You Lose.

People are speaking out against the telecommunications bills passed this past summer by the Senate and the House.

People who are concerned about higher prices, less competition, and fewer voices being heard. People outside the telecommunications industry.

People who favor deregulation -- but believe we're missing an historic opportunity to do it right. Here's a sampling:

USA TODAY "Monopolies win, you lose."

The Boston Globe "...consumers...were short-changed in the legislative process."

The Sacramento Bee "...the bill leaves the Baby Bells...with too much power to choke off competition and raise rates to local customers in order to subsidize their ventures into the long-distance field... this bill appears to tolerate levels of concentration that could effectively drive out any diversity in opinion or information in certain communities."

The New York Times "... it risks putting local phone companies in a position to drive rivals out of business ...it could also end up concentrating control of the main media outlets -- newspaper, TV and radio -- in too few hands... In rural areas, under this bill, a powerful media magnate could buy up *every* source of news, including the local phone company."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH "Prices would rise... [It] goes much too far."

The Oregonian "...a single owner could control all the media outlets and communications links in a given market -- a scary monopoly."

THE DENVER POST "If the current bill becomes law, phone prices may rise and consumers will have fewer -- not more -- choices."

WORCESTER TELEGRAM & GAZETTE "...the legislation would extend the monopolistic control of the seven Regional Bell Operating Companies...by permitting them to enter the long-distance marketplace *before* they are forced to face local telephone service competition from long-distance carriers or cable companies."

The Philadelphia Inquirer "Slow down in deregulating the info highway, or the public will get run over."

BusinessWeek "If Congress really wants a free phone market, with the competition and lower prices that will come with it, it shouldn't be quite so generous to those local monopolists, the Baby Bells."

THE TENNESSEAN "...the problem with the bill is that it removes most telephone and cable rate restrictions without first assuring that competition is in place."

The Seattle Times "...the bill would intensify the communications industry's instinct to monopolize markets and raise prices."

the Charleston Gazette The State Newspaper "...the bill trashes long-time rules that have restricted concentration of media ownership... Deregulation and 'reform' have increasingly become code words for freeing huge corporations from the government oversight that prevents them from gouging the public and developing stifling monopolies."

Chicago Business Crain's "...the telecommunications bill winding its way through Congress would maintain local phone service monopolies in Chicago, and most of the rest of the country..."

Chicago Sun-Times "Until the public is convinced that its interests are being served, special interest legislation can well wait on hold."

Detroit Free Press "This bill would tilt the field even further in favor of existing cable TV and phone companies. In the end, the trick would be on consumers."

The Competitive Long Distance Coalition

CompTel AT&T LDDS WORLDCOM MCI Sprint tra ACTA

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Rabin, America and Israel.

ANOTHER COUNTRY

By Martin Peretz

JERUSALEM

"There is a time for war and a time for peace," says Ecclesiastes. It is, of course, true in the life of a nation; and when, as was the case with Yitzhak Rabin, an individual has been so enmeshed with his nation's fate, it is true, often merely poignantly, but sometimes, as in a threnodic drama, also in the lives of men and women. On Mount Herzl, the hilltop in Jerusalem where the founders of the state, including Theodor Herzl himself, are interred, President Clinton in an elegant eulogy, resonant with feeling and authenticity, at once humorous and grave, evoked the career of a daring soldier and an exacting one.

Rabin's path in the military is the stuff of legend. But the legend is neither false nor rare. It is how the Yishuv, the Jewish community, during the era of tower and stockade Zionism and beyond, defended itself against marauders and hostile armies. The Palmach were the shock troops of early statehood, put into the most perilous positions whether to maintain a protective line or to advance a strategic goal. The group traced its lineage to a rogue operation conceived and mobilized in the '30s by one of the few high-placed friends the Jews had among the British Mandatory forces in Palestine, Orde Wingate. These Palmachniks were not, however, just soldiers. Most of them had been brought up in the Achdut Avodah, an especially left flank of socialist Zionism, which had little respect for hierarchy or portent. Still, they had their visions of justice, and these visions, which expressed themselves as both austere values and demanding norms of quotidian behavior, made them an impecunious but incandescent aristocracy of public virtue for several decades. Rabin was exactly this kind of aristocrat, blunt, analytical, without illusion, selfless. He knew that however just in the absolute and however reasonable in the circumstance (he recognized the difference between the two) were the visions of Zionism, their justice and reasonableness would not substitute for Jewish military power.

Rabin was, then, as Bill Clinton put it, a man of the deed, and the ongoing deed culminated in the lightning victory of the Six Day War. This was a war initiated by Israel's enemies with an undisguised malign purpose. The defeat of these enemies and the territories it put under Israel's control may now seem to some a pyrrhic victory, better to have been left unwon. This was not how Rabin saw it. On the contrary: he came to be convinced and to try to convince his fellow Israelis that peace depended and depends on these territories, first on their possession as a demonstration of what Israel could do in its own defense and second, on their being devolved (or, rather, most of them being devolved) as a sign of the righteousness which only the strong can afford.

Following this narrative and grasping the opportunities which the palpable success of Zionism presented, Rabin, the very practical man of war, wanted to probe if this could now be an era of practical peace. When Clinton asked the mourners in Jerusalem—and around the world—"to look at the leaders from all over the Middle East ... who have journeyed here today," he was telling us that the meaning of the slain prime minister's life was that it was whole. In the midst of a nightmare I recited to myself the 126th Psalm: "We were like those that dreamed...." It is true that Rabin, who survived his life as a warrior, was killed in his life as a peacemaker. But peace was the aim of his wars, and wars only a sad and lamentable way to peace.

What was it about Yitzhak Rabin that brought the American president twice (once on hearing of the death and then again at the funeral) almost to tears? Rabin's aversion to cant, certainly, his honesty, sometimes brutal honesty, in the human encounters of world leaders. But Rabin was also, perhaps, the representative Israeli: not always charming or, for that matter, polite. But with this people, so to speak, and in this place the West began its own history. The laws of our civilization originate in Zion, and they followed the dispersion of the Jews to the far corners. With the return of the Jews to Zion, that civilization's resilience and its innovations in science and statecraft are tested anew, and the stakes are high—not least for the Arab peoples whose habits and convictions dominate the entire Middle East.

The fact is that no president of the United States has had such valent sympathy for Israel as President Clinton. You could see it on his face this week, you could hear it in his words: "Israel's covenant with God—for freedom, for tolerance, for security, for peace—that covenant must hold." Thomas Jefferson once said that France was every American's other country. A gentile I know said to me on the phone, after having watched the Mount Herzl ceremony, that the sentiment of American Jews for Israel is "axiomatic." But why did she, a "gentile also weep for Rabin and his people? Because Israel is our other country." (In Rabin's Israel, of course, America is *their* other country.) Can one conjure up millions of Americans glued to CNN to watch an assassinated Chancellor Kohl's funeral or, for that matter, Boris Yeltsin's? One would have to go back to an imagined slaying of Winston Churchill in wartime Britain even to approximate the bonds Americans feel for Israel and which they expressed around the death of one man. So it was not just Clinton who felt it and said it. The shock was measured even in the TV ratings. And, in Jerusalem, Americans of differing political convictions made the arduous trip—as a polit-

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IT'S TIME TO OPEN UP THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

- Access 2000
- Adelphia Communications Corp.
- American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)
- Ameritech
- Bell Atlantic
- BellSouth
- Booth American Co.
- Bresnan Communications Co.
- Cablevision Industries
- Cablevision Systems Corp.
- Citizens for a Sound Economy
- Comcast Corporation
- Cox Enterprises Inc.
- Fox
- GTE
- Hearing Society for the Bay Area, Inc.
- Insight Communications
- InterMedia Partners
- Latin American Women and Supporters
- Lenfest Group
- Marcus Cable
- Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens

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ical act, sure, but also, as their haggard faces showed, as a gesture of solidarity. Pat Moynihan and Robert Dole, John Lewis and Newt Gingrich. And there, too, deep in a personal sorrow you could feel immediately was Ted Kennedy who'd brought some earth from the graves of his martyred brothers to mix with the soil of Zion at Rabin's resting place.

I don't want to be romantic about this. Policy is policy, and there will be differences between Washington and Jerusalem. Still, beyond policy differences, there are those who simply "don't get it," and at least two of them came with the president. They were both ex-presidents. George Bush, dapper and blithe, looked vacant and uncomprehending. He'd never understood—or never cared about—the precariousness of Israel's position in the region, and so he couldn't grasp the romance of its survival. With Bush and James Baker gone from GOP power, there isn't an important Republican personage to express that nasty social hauteur toward Israel which these two sons of privilege made routine. Interviewed on television, Jimmy Carter rewrote his views of Rabin, forgetting that it was his relentless pressure on the Labor government to make unilateral and premature concessions to the Palestinians that persuaded the Israeli electorate to choose Menachem Begin as a premier who would not and could not capitulate. What Rabin was trying to tell Carter prior to his 1977 defeat was that peace was not simply declared or given. It has to emerge from real facts, from certain possibilities open and other alternatives closed. This is, I think, what Henry Kissinger, tear-streaked and choked, meant when he characterized Rabin as a master of the circumstances with which he was faced, a master in war and a master in trying for peace. Kissinger recognized in Rabin the great realist tradition, one not exercised in behalf of Imperium but in defense of the remnant of Jewry. Kissinger's tears show the depth of his own Jewish feelings, and it is a mark of how deeply pluralist America is that it hardly thinks strange the Jewish passions of even its most powerful citizens.

Kissinger and Rabin had had their own quarrels in the past. (I also suspect that Kissinger is skeptical—as, for what it's worth, I am—about the stability of Israel's

Swamp man

After the funeral, and after the dark, sleepless nights which preceded it, Israelis are awaking to a different country. Their conviction that they can adjudicate non-violently the deep issues tearing their society apart is shaken. Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's greatest prime minister since Ben Gurion, has been assassinated by an Israeli Jew.

Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir, attended yeshiva and continued studying Torah while a law student at Bar Ilan University. He found comfort among the extreme religious nationalist groups who traffic in the Judaism of the fist, the Judaism which claims to stand above moral constraint and civic virtue. This perverse reading of sacred texts is yet further proof that a thin line divides the righteous worship of God from idolatry. The religious swamps that nourished Baruch Goldstein have now sent us Yigal Amir, who no doubt also sees himself as loyal heir to the Jewish tradition. For such men, it is a tradition in which absolute truths justify murder—first of innocent Muslims and now of an innocent Israeli prime minister.

Yigal Amir was not a madman, as many wish to believe. This assassination wasn't incoherent or out of character. According to Amir's confession, he tried twice previously to assassinate the prime minister. He was motivated by a core religious ideology that lives on the fringes of Israeli society.

These fringes sprang up as radical mutations of the Gush Emunim settler movement, which became a central force in religious Zionism after the Six Day War in 1967. Gush was based on the assumptions that the Torah prohibits territorial compromise even for the sake of peace, and that Israel is in the midst of a historic messianic process, beliefs foreign to more moderate pre-1967 religious Zionism.

Yet even Gush's theology, extreme in its own right, does not countenance the murder of an Israeli prime minister. In recent years, however, a fringe went further, making two arguments that break even with Gush. The first is that when Rabin's government made territorial compromises it lost its legitimacy and its right to the obedience of its citizens. The second, and even more dangerous, is that, since the peace process was doomed to fail, Rabin was endangering Jewish life. And when faced with an immediate threat to Jewish life, the Torah permits, or even obligates, its devotees to kill. A perverse religious legitimation was given for transgressing the most sacred prohibition: thou shalt not murder. Indeed, during Yigal Amir's appearance in court this week, when asked by the judge if he knew of the prohibition, thou shalt not murder, he repeatedly fell back on this maniacal reformulation.

Amir's and his kind emerged because mainstream Israel allowed them to. This was a failure both political and theological. Likud, which hosted rallies where fanatics depicted Rabin in Gestapo uniform, has much to answer for. And the rabbinical establishment also did not act vigilitantly enough to uproot this spiritual cancer. It is too soon to know whether the shock of this assassination will be sufficient to reinstate the taboo which once existed against violence and violent rhetoric.

Shortly after Rabin's death, one thing is clear to Israelis. They counted on his authority, strength and confidence to lead them through this difficult process, and they miss him. They trusted him and his judgment, and he is no longer there to quiet their fears. Rabin, shy and awkward in public, never publicly displayed the mannerisms of a father figure. Yet Israelis are discovering, very painfully, that they have lost a political father nonetheless.

MOSHE HALBERTAL

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present agreement with the Palestinians.) Rabin was still ambassador to the United States when, in 1972, Richard Nixon ran for his second term against George McGovern. The Israeli emissary famously tilted toward Nixon, as perhaps ambassadors should never do, though the wink to the Jews did not draw very many of them away from their Democratic leanings. In retrospect, of course, what one remembers about Israel in 1973 was the threat to its very life. The Jewish state ultimately recovered from the blows of Yom Kippur only because of a resupply of U.S. arms—a resupply, that is, by Dr. Kissinger. Given what is now known of McGovern's views on Israel and what we already knew then about his conception of the American role in the world, the odds are that the resupply would not have come and that Israel would have emerged a traumatically wounded version of a survivor-state.

Rabin was neither a fatalist nor a pessimist. Nonetheless, he could look the Medusa head in the face and see what it told. A politician's ability to imagine tragedy, like a soldier's, is a blessing to the people he governs or the unit he commands. For Rabin to be beaten on the battlefield would have been such a tragedy—a devastation, in fact. But even adversary Arab states, not known for prudent judgment, would be averse to armed adventure against Israel now. So Rabin was able to see, and was helped to see by Shimon Peres, the other tragedy, a tragedy in two parts: the Palestinians bearing the yoke of occupation and the Israelis tearing themselves apart, trying to be firm and decent all at once. Decency was bound to lose here, Rabin felt, and firmness turn to a harshness that the young of Israel would not countenance.

The wager Rabin made could not have been staked casually. He knew, Fouad Ajami has suggested, that he was asking his people to do something like asking the Americans to return California to Mexico. No polity could do this without the extremism which Israel continues to experience. But Yigal Amir is not an augury of endemic deep civil strife in Israeli society. He is evidence, rather, of theological recklessness in times of change. Although Rabin was angered by the demagoguery of his foes, he would not be deterred by it.

Of all the eulogists at the funeral, none so intuitively felt or so clearly conveyed Rabin's bravery as did King Hussein of Jordan. A brave man himself, he, too, has been stalked by destiny, a constant target of a regicide's bomb or bullet, a witness to the assassination in Jerusalem of his grandfather, King Abdullah, murdered because he dared contemplate peace with the Jews. Diminutive in size, majestic in bearing, Hussein delivered a none-too-subtle message to his Arab cousins—especially the Egyptians. Egypt was actually represented by two speakers at the funeral, Hosni Mubarak and U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, neither of whom moved beyond the formulaic coldness of the textual peace of convenience Cairo has had with Israel for sixteen years. "We are not ashamed nor are we afraid nor are we anything but determined," countered the Hashemite monarch, paying tribute to the man he called "brother" and "friend."

Leah Rabin did not speak at her husband's funeral. But she has been visible since, regal in appearance, reminding many of Jacqueline Kennedy in her grief. Where, however, Mrs. Kennedy had her emotions under taut control, Mrs. Rabin kissed those she loved, shook hands with those, like Peres, from whom she felt remote and excoriated the Israeli right which never did call its fringe ultras to account. Unable to draw its own base into active opposition to the peace process, the Likud happily relied on street messianists to do it for them. Though the killer came from the *edot hamizrach*, Jewish communities of the East, the worst of those extremists are Europeans and, alas, Americans. Mrs. Rabin rightly saw the country's tragedy as conflated with her own, and she would not be herself if she failed to identify its perpetrators.

Rabin himself must have been uncomfortable at the peace rally, called to protest what some now see as the handwriting on the wall. This was his last public appearance after which there would be no other. He was not at ease with mass enthusiasms, even with those he excited himself. At the end of the rally, after Rabin's speech, the crowd sang *Shir Ha'shalom*, song of peace, a lyric which is now to Israel what "We Shall Overcome" was to us in the '60s. He did not know its words so, standing a bit stiffly, had to depend on a printed sheet for them. Then he folded it neatly and put it in his pocket. A few minutes later, it was soaked in his blood, and he was on his way to the hospital and then, as the tradition tells us, to join the patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel. It could be a scene from a corny movie, this bloodied paper later produced by Rabin's aide at the funeral. But it is true.

It is also true that a million Israeli men and women, mostly young, trooped to his bier on the day before his burial. This is nearly 20 percent of the entire population, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, secular and pious, the wealthy and the needy, the learned and the television watchers, soldiers, of course, and even some Arabs. In Hebron and elsewhere, to be sure, there were churlish comments from Palestinians and Jews. But what does the long line of mourners tell us, the people sitting on the street curbs and crying, the dazed faces which managed a smile as the buses with dignitaries, the cars carrying unfamiliar heads of unfamiliar states, wound their way up to the cemetery? From them was taken their hero, and not a poetic or easy hero at that. After all, he did not even know their song. But they are truly the confident of Zion, which until the triumph of Zionism in our time had known little ease. They are the future of Israel, and for them Yitzhak Rabin and others from his generation of practical and deliberate visionaries are responsible. They are his grandchildren and his accomplishment. They want peace; and they want it very much. But, if denied, they will not be undefended: they will defend themselves. For that, too, Rabin is responsible, and for that, too, he is honored. •

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Behind the non-radical that wasn't.

COLIN'S K-STREET CROWD

By Matthew Cooper

Put away the handkerchief. Dry those tears. The dream of a President Colin Powell had the nation swooning with visions of a bold change, an above-politics military man who would seize Washington with the ferocity of Desert Storm. But that was always a fantasy. Beyond the General's own preternatural caution, the most telling aspect of the Powell non-run was the character of those who composed the Powell entourage. Never radicals, they reinforced Powell's love of the status quo.

From the beginning, most friends of Powell told him not to run or at least to be wary. Some said the personal toll was too great; others deemed the organizational obstacles too tall. In the former category was Richard Armitage, a Powell pal from the Pentagon. Big, burly and bald, with a Stallone-sized chest, Armitage is Powell's dearest friend. In 1992, Powell told Morton Kondracke: "I would trust him with my life, my children, my reputation, everything I have." So when I was sitting across the table from the 50-year-old Armitage in his Virginia office a week before Powell made his announcement and the phone rang, little wonder it turned out to be you-know-who. "Yeah. Right. Uh huh.... That was the General," Armitage said in clipped tones. "We've talked every day for fifteen years." Despite a journalist's yearning, the conversation remained private.

The other reported Friends of Powell (FOPs)—some accurate, some not—were hardly revolutionaries, either. Indeed, they're almost a roster of Washington's Establishment. The media has dubbed glitterati like Bob Woodward as a Powell friend. Not true, says those genuinely close to the General. On the other hand, ABC's Sam Donaldson is a Powell pal, as is CNN's Bernard Shaw. *U.S. News & World Report* dubbed Barbra Streisand part of "The Powell Network," but one close Powell pal says that "they have only met a couple of times at functions—kiss, kiss—but that's it." Caspar Weinberger is friendly with Powell, but the relationship isn't as intimate as the General's ties to Frank Carlucci.

All politicians say that they're close to their family. Powell really is. His only son, Michael, a Washington lawyer, is another Andrew Cuomo—the scion as adviser. Michael helped his father write his 1992 Howard University address touting a "message of self-reliance." Vernon Jordan, a close Powell pal, is a Washington monument. He's the classic lawyer-lobbyist, known for his Turnbull & Asser suits, his lobbying and his presence on more than half a dozen corporate boards, the Trilateral Commission and just about every other big-shot outfit.

Why is it worth knowing the Friends of Powell? Well, friends offer a measure of the man and, in Powell's case, they show how much of a Washington creature he is and help explain why he pulled back at the last minute. You could tell a lot about George Bush because he surrounded himself with operators, such as James Baker, better known for their political savvy than their ideas. Baker reflected Bush's wariness of "the vision thing." Bill Clinton's entourage, wide and varied, earned its own moniker, Friends of Bill. But the range of FOBs—from the Democratic Leadership Council's Al From to left-liberal California Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who co-chaired his '92 campaign—telegraphed Clinton's muddled mind. Clinton was rich in ideas—and contradictions, too.

Powell's pals resemble the Bush model: fixers. That's not surprising since the 58-year-old General came of age in the Reagan-Bush era. Powell fancies himself a doer, not a thinker. His soldier's disdain for self-styled *penseurs* is palpable. (See "It's a Wonderful Lifer," TNR, November 6.) And that disdain is reflected in whom Powell calls his friends. What the FOPs have in common is a Powell-like competence and a Powell-like lack of vision. They're all bright and adroit and likable. And useful: a few more fixers would have spared Bill Clinton disasters like Zoë Baird and the tarmac haircut. But fixers aren't philosophers, and no one in the Powell entourage would have brought a larger vision to the table. Indeed, the excitement about Powell initially was that the General would shake up Washington. He'd take the best ideas from both parties and forge the much hoped for, but rarely seen, radical middle. But if you look at Powell's friends, they're Washington players like him.

Consider Kenneth Duberstein. In the last few weeks, he's emerged as Powell's most prominent political adviser. The friendship between the two is deep and lasting. On the last day of the Reagan administration, "Duberdog," as Powell calls him, then the White House chief of staff, gave National Security Adviser Powell a ride to work. He was one of those who huddled in

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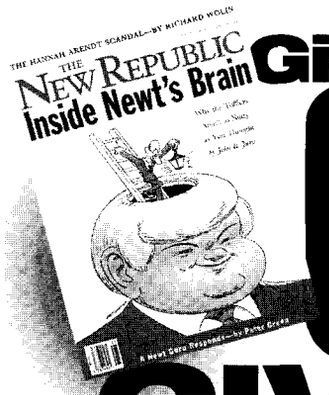

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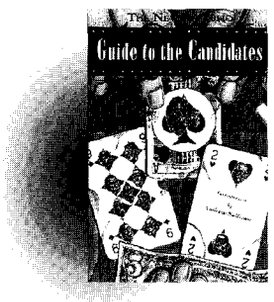

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Powell's McLean, Virginia, home, a faux chateau where the General and his family considered their fate. (Meanwhile, he's also advised Gingrich on the budget—a potential conflict of interest, perhaps, had their been a Powell GOP candidacy.) Duberstein, like Powell, is a New Yorker who speaks a bit of Yiddish. His tastes run from special handmade pretzels to red convertibles. Duberstein didn't make himself available for this article, but it's well known that he's Powell's top political adviser.

It's a role Duberstein knows well. At 51, he's heeled in the Beltway's iron triangle—the executive branch, the Congress and the lobbies. He began his upward trajectory as a congressional creature, an aide to New York's Jacob Javits. The senator was, of course, the avatar of a liberal Republicanism that is no longer.

In 1980, Javits lost the GOP nomination to Alfonse D'Amato, but he stubbornly remained in the race as a spoiler, helping to defeat Democrat Elizabeth Holtzman and elect the D'Amato we know so well. Duberstein no doubt learned a lesson about spoilers and third parties that helped cement his conviction that Powell should run as a Republican. But in the process he seems to have steered Powell away from what could have been an exciting, independent candidacy—free of the burden of Gingrich and Dole. Sure, an independent candidacy might have been quixotic. It might, though, have succeeded, given America's anger with the special-interest burdens of both parties.

RICHARD ARMITAGE AND KENNETH DUBERSTEIN
BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

But this is typical Duberstein. Pragmatism is paramount. You might have expected a Javits Republican to be aghast by the Reagan Revolution, but Duberstein was among its most vigorous foot soldiers. In 1981, Duberstein joined and later headed the Gipper's congressional liaison office, a position that made him responsible for putting together the Reagan coalition on the Hill. With aplomb, Duberstein forged an amalgam of conservative Democrats, the so-called Boll Weevils, and Republicans to pass Reaganomics. He was close to Chicago's Dan Rostenkowski. At one key meeting on Social Security in 1983, Rosty would only let one Republican sit in: Duberstein. The results of Duberstein's efforts are infamous. Overzealous military spending and excessive tax cuts led to $5 trillion worth of debt. It would be different if Duberstein believed in the Reaganite movement. But conservatives have doubts. "I don't think he's loyal," says one GOP consultant. "He's for Javits when Javits is up. He's for Reagan when Reagan's up."

Like a lot of Washingtonians, what Duberstein lacks in ideology he makes up for in likability. Peggy Noonan got him best when she called him "a Dickens character, broadly drawn: grinning, winking, snapping one-liners, a man who lives on energy and cunning, who wants to be liked and not rock the boat and get the job done."

Not rocking the boat. Duberstein's done well by it. When Duberstein left the White House in 1983, his resignation letter bluntly declared his intention to make more money. His new lobbying firm, Timmons & Co., threw him a party in the Senate Caucus Room, and the Budweiser flowed, thanks to the firm's client, Anheuser-Busch.

In 1987, Duberstein returned to the Reagan White House and became, in short order, Reagan's last chief of staff. With Democrats back in control of the Senate as well as the House, Reaganism was on its last legs. And Duberstein's chore was not to legislate but to vindicate. He made sure Reagan left on a feel-good wave.

In a style similar to that of the original Reagan spinner, Michael Deaver, Duberstein told author Lou Cannon his theory of the president as an actor. "It's the ability to have people looking at you and you lead comfortably," Duberstein told Cannon. "It's welcoming another head of state as another leading actor who will share top billing with you. It's knowing that there is a final curtain." When the Reagans flew home to Bel Air in 1989, Duberstein, once Javits's man, was at their side.

After leaving the White House, Duberstein found a new cause—his own lobbying firm. General Powell has condemned corporate welfare and said that politicians should take on the "welfare kings on K Street." But it's hard to see why Duberstein would countenance such an assault. In the fashion of several other lobbyists in the 1980s and 1990s, Duberstein created a bipartisan lobbying firm—"administration-proof," so to speak—able to serve clients regardless of who held power. With Walter Mondale's counsel, Michael Berman, at his side, The Duberstein Group became one of the capital's hottest shops. A recent search of the firm's clients by TNR's Elissa Silverman found a slew of corporate clients paying for Duberstein's attentions. Active in trying to limit lawsuit damages, The Duberstein Group helps several clients in the insurance industry, including the Ameri-

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can Council of Life Insurance and the euphemistic-sounding Civil Justice Reform Group. Whether it's Monsanto or United Airlines—they get their money's worth. "Duberstein has a talent that sounds simple," says Torie Clarke, a former Bush campaign official, now with the National Cable Television Association, a Duberstein client. "He knows how to figure out what the strategy is, and he draws a battle plan." Given that his firm is so bipartisan, it's no surprise Duberstein writes checks to politicians of both parties. FEC records show moderate Republicans like Maine's Bill Cohen and right-wingers like Indiana's David McIntosh getting Duberstein's largess. So do Democrats like Texas's Charles Stenholm.

But Duberstein is perhaps best known for his work on behalf of Bush Supreme Court nominees David Souter and Clarence Thomas. Powell's candor has often been refreshing, but it was Duberstein who programmed the "stealth strategy" for Souter and Thomas, having both men say as little as possible about their views so as not to be "Borked." Now, the nominee was the actor. It was Duberstein who helped Thomas save his nomination with the "high-tech lynching" strategy. But the more objectionable part of Duberstein's coaching came *before* Anita Hill made her charges. In mock Senate hearings dubbed "murder boards," Duberstein schooled Thomas in the tricks of the trade. Keep your answers short and vague. Give an optimistic thumbs-up when you walk into the committee room. Don't drive your Corvette lest you look too flashy. Always thank the senators for being fair. Duberstein, according to authors Jane Mayer and Jill Abramson, thought Thomas's legal mind was lacking and a "fundamental problem." Nevertheless, he pushed for Thomas's elevation to the high court. Even friends of Thomas were dismayed that Duberstein had treated Thomas like Reagan and overmanaged him. The once-serious Senate inquiry into a nominee's views had been made moot.

Richard Armitage is, like Duberstein, an operator, a fixer, and a good one. And he is an even closer friend of Powell's. A wrestler and a Naval Academy graduate, Armitage is known for his physical bravado. He's a committed weight lifter. After Annapolis, he served an incredible four tours in Vietnam and bravely helped launch a flotilla to evacuate Vietnamese refugees when Saigon fell in 1975. Armitage was all Navy, but friends from the Reagan era say that, like Powell, Armitage thought like an Army man. Indeed, Armitage's experience as a commando made him more like a besieged infantryman than a carrier captain, safely offshore. "I guess I look like a ground pounder," he says. And, like Powell's, Armitage's biography bridges race. Armitage has eight children, six of them adopted, three of them black.

Powell and Armitage became close in the early 1980s when the two worked at the Pentagon. Armitage would arrive as early as 5 a.m. "I was the nightshift, and Richie was the day shift," recalls Richard Perle, who served with Powell and Armitage. In various troubleshooting roles at State and Defense, Armitage earned a reputation as a tough negotiator. In 1988, he was sent to try to persuade Manuel Noriega to step down from office. "He was no buffoon," Armitage recalls of meeting Noriega at his headquarters. "He was incredibly cunning.... His face looked even more pockmarked that day." Intellectually honest, Armitage sounded an early alarm bell that the Reagan administration should pull its support for Philippine strongman Ferdinand Marcos; later, Armitage helped negotiate the removal of America's Philippine-based forces. And, to Armitage's eternal credit, he's an enemy of Ross Perot and the far-left Christic Institute, which has peddled a conspiracy theory about Armitage being involved in a Southeast Asian CIA drug-running scandal. (The FBI found the charges untrue.) Armitage has Democratic fans, too. His management of U.S. aid to Russia at the start of the Clinton administration was, says Strobe Talbott, "marvelous."

No one questions Armitage's competence. "Rich could make the trains run on time. He's not a philosopher. He's very, very practical," says a Reagan-era Defense official who notes that Armitage's Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs job at the Pentagon has been held by Paul Warnke, who aspired to more strategic thinking than did Armitage. The question, though, would have been whether this Friend of Powell was any more likely to shake up the establishment than Duberstein. Armitage is not especially political, but it's revealing that he, like Duberstein, plays the money game. Armitage has written checks this year to three GOP candidates—Bob Dole, Lamar Alexander and Richard Lugar.

If Armitage at 50 has any larger vision, it is the Powell Doctrine. That doctrine, in its most terse form, says that U.S. engagement abroad should be limited to those situations where the U.S. can win. At a recent Washington conference on Powell's military record, Armitage was the stand-in for Powell. "I'm not comfortable with the Joint Chiefs of Staff having to be on guard against armchair amateurs," Armitage declared with the conviction of a Vietnam vet burned by McNamara-era myopia Pentagon. It came as no surprise, then, that Armitage told me Vietnam was "a half-hearted effort based on a half-baked idea." No argument there. What's at issue is whether Armitage, like Powell, has overlearned the Vietnam lesson. The latest experience in Bosnia seems to contradict the Powell-Armitage wariness of limited air power, just as Powell's caution on the Gulf war seems, in hindsight, to have been excessive.

We have seen this before, of course: the substitution of pragmatism for a philosophy. In George Bush and Bill Clinton—and before them Jimmy Carter—we've seen what the dearth of ideas does to a president. (And Bob Dole's no comfort on this score, either.) In the end Powell shared their dearth of a philosophy. That should come as no surprise. Neither should it have been a shock that his crowd of talented, loyal but lacking men reflected his caution and helped deter him from running. Their departure from the scene is no cause for tears. •

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The Caribbean roots of Powell's decision.

THE CULTURE OF CAUTION

By Orlando Patterson

There is a line in Colin Powell's autobiography that says much about the culture that nurtured him. He is describing the reaction of his relatives to the news that he had changed his college major from engineering to geology. What good was that, they wished to know. "And, most critical to these security-haunted people, could geology lead to a pension?"

Colin Powell knew his people. West Indians in general, and Jamaicans in particular, are more than normally obsessed with security. "Dread" is a feared and favored word in modern Jamaican creole, describing a chronic existential insecurity. And it is this dread which may account for Powell's decision not to seek the presidency. In understanding Powell's extreme caution, his West Indian immigrant background cannot be overestimated.

The Caribbean islands presented to their inhabitants a succession of challenges that instilled a sense of constant insecurity. Not only are the islands dirt poor and overpopulated but their history has been one of the most brutal in modern times, an endless series of harsh challenges. Some were man-made: slavery, the post-emancipation plantation system, the eroded peasant hillsides. Others were simply acts of god, like the volcanoes, earthquakes and hurricanes that periodically flatten or burn everything in sight, sometimes pulling whole cities undersea. To the natives, these islands were never paradise.

But they were home. The challenge to survive in these tiny, overcrowded hothouses of peoples from every corner of the world resulted in an archipelago of homelands, fiercely loved, and as fiercely loathed, eagerly departed from and obsessively longed for by exiles living in overcrowded Northern tenements smelling of rum, curried goat and coconuts. More than most other peoples, West Indians belong to a migratory culture—a continuing migration that has increased with time and inevitably focused on the United States.

There have been two great movements of West Indians to America. The first began over 100 years ago, with more than 95,000 migrants arriving during the second half of the century, many via Panama, where mainly Jamaican and Barbadian workers constructed the canal. It escalated during the first three decades of this century, when 290,000 came, but was severely curtailed by the racist immigration law of 1924. During the next thirty years, an average of fewer than 2,000 arrived annually. This first wave defined the American image of Caribbeans, and Colin Powell is its ultimate success story.

These early immigrants came mainly from lower-middle and solidly working-class backgrounds. Powell's fit this pattern: his father was working class, and his mother's high-school background would have placed her firmly in the middle class at a time when less than 2 percent of Jamaicans had such education. Their light-brown complexion, another index of middle-class status, was also typical of those early immigrants.

The second West Indian wave arrived in the 1960s and continues to this day. The Hart-Cellar Immigration Reform Act of 1965 came in the nick of time for West Indian migratory culture. Only three years earlier Britain had closed its doors, blocking a growing movement by the West Indian working classes to the former metropole. The pent-up migratory force broke on America right after. By the late '60s, Jamaica alone was sending more than 10,000 people per annum. Between 1960 and 1993 a total of 845,588 arrived, 57 percent from Jamaica.

West Indians of the second wave are more complex in social origin than their predecessors. They come mainly from the two extremes of the islands' talent pool: the most and the least able. The upwardly mobile working poor have largely stayed put as the modernization of the islands' economies has opened up opportunities at the top of West Indian society. Since colonial elites no longer block internal mobility as they did in the 1920s, talented lower-middle-class and working-class people can now move into the upper middle class instead of emigrating. The very brightest people, however, still find the smallness and confinement of the islands a severe constraint on their ambitions, so they leave to swim in bigger ponds. At the same time, modern mass transportation has considerably reduced the cost of migration as well as its selective pressure, so peo-

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

In Defense of Government

[Today's guest columnist is the distinguished historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. His article is condensed from a commencement speech he delivered at Roosevelt University, May 21, 1995.]

For my generation of Americans, those who were born during the First World War, grew up in the Great Depression, and served in World War II, the Rooseveltian belief in the national government as the instrument of the people seemed abundantly justified. It was the national government under the leadership of Franklin Roosevelt that brought us through economic collapse and beat the Nazis and the Japanese, preserving American democracy against domestic failure and foreign war.

Roosevelt's immediate successors sustained this belief in the national government. Polls taken during the Kennedy administration showed that more than 75 percent of Americans thought the national government was working in their interests and telling them the truth. But today only about 20 percent trust government to serve their interests and to level with them.

Why this remarkable reversal? For one thing, presidents after Kennedy let Americans down. Johnson deceived them about Vietnam. Nixon deceived them about Watergate. Reagan deceived them about Irangate. The national government proved unable to solve the problems of poverty and racism. And the availability of public funds under lax supervision opened the door to graft and rip-off, whether by Pentagon suppliers or Medicare doctors or savings-and-loan bankers or welfare cheats.

In the 1980s, President Reagan led an all-out attack on government. "Government is not the solution to our problem," he said. "Government is the problem." Politicians trashing each other in television sound bites further undermined public confidence in the profession to which they all belong. The media made cynicism a national industry. And today, stirred up by the furious flow of Speaker Gingrich's unending words, many regard the national government not just as the problem but as the enemy.

This assault on the national government is represented as a disinterested movement to "return" power to the people. But the withdrawal of the national government does not transfer power to the people. It transfers power to the historical rival of the national government—the great corporate interests. As Theodore Roosevelt observed of the greedy trusts of his day, "If this irresponsible outside power is to be controlled in the interest of the general public, it can be controlled in only one way—by giving adequate power of control to the National Government." The fight against government regulation of corporate privilege, TR added, "is chiefly done under cover; and especially under the cover of an appeal to states' rights."

It is a delusion to say that, because state government is closer to the people, it is more responsive to their needs and concerns. Historically it is national government that has served as the protector of the powerless. It is the national government that affirmed the Bill of Rights against local vigilantism and preserved natural resources against local greed. The national government has civilized industry, secured the rights of labor organizations, improved income for the farmer, and provided a decent living for the old. Above all, the national government has vindicated racial justice against local bigotry. Had the states' rights creed prevailed, the U.S. would still have slavery.

And historically the national government has been more honest and efficient than state and local governments. How well are state and local governments doing with their own problems, problems that lie primarily within their jurisdiction, such as our deteriorating schools and our escalating crime? As for bureaucracy, duplication, and waste, will there be more or less if a single federal agency is to be replaced by fifty separate state agencies? Just wait until local pols get their hands on those federal block grants!

The crusade against government springs from a conviction that, if we get government off our backs, our problems will solve themselves. But far from solving problems, the old, unregulated, laissez-faire economy of the 19th century generated the problems that produced class warfare, the manifestos of Marx , and in time, the Great Depression. Democratic capitalism has triumphed because of the long campaign mounted by reformers, Franklin Roosevelt foremost among them, to use the national government to humanize the industrial order.

But things have slipped back since FDR's time. Recent studies by the Twentieth Century Fund show that the inequality of wealth is increasing in our country at an alarming rate. The top one percent of families owns more than 40 percent of the nation's wealth. Although Great Britain is notorious as a class-ridden society, the top one percent in Britain owns only about 18 percent of the nation's wealth. The current push in Congress to cut taxes for the rich and social programs for the poor will only deepen the inequalities that divide and demoralize the American people.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was the transcendent American individualist, but he became impatient at the grousing about government he kept hearing around him, as he made clear in his journal: "It is folly to treat the state as if it were some individual arbitrarily willing this and so....I confess I lose all respect for this tedious denouncing of the state by idlers who rot in indolence, selfishness, & envy in the chimney corner."

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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ple at the bottom of the society who find little prospect of work at home also move out. This new flow's two extremes are reflected in the fact that the post-'60s migration has, on the one hand, presented America with numerous professors, doctors, nurses, businessmen and two Nobel laureates but, on the other hand, has produced the murderous savagery of the posse gangs now taking over the nation's crack trade.

The starker difference between the old and the new immigrant waves is that the older generation were better placed educationally vis-à-vis the American black population. While the current wave of migrants have spent a couple more years in school, West Indian primary education has deteriorated since colonial days, and the prewar immigrants, who averaged eleven years of school attendance, actually enjoyed a larger advantage over American blacks. Today, African Americans have actually surpassed immigrant West Indians in years of schooling.

Moreover, the first cohort of immigrants found an America immensely different from today's. Powell's parents entered a highly segregated society. Because of the tight housing market faced by all blacks, West Indians had to live among the African American population. In this, they differed greatly from European immigrants, who established distinct ethnic neighborhoods. But this does not mean, as some have argued, that West Indians became an "invisible" group, forced to assimilate into black America. They were all too visible to the native African American population that both resented and were intrigued by their pushiness, their intellectualism, their strange ways of talking, dressing and dancing. And they were very visible to the whites who quickly stereotyped them as more adaptable and hardworking than native-born blacks.

More educated than American blacks and, like all immigrants, motivated and driven, these early West Indians quickly monopolized the role of intermediary between whites and African Americans. In the early decades of the twentieth century, black Americans remained generally hostile to the Democratic Party, and by the late '30s and '40s it was West Indians who cracked the racist walls around Tammany Hall and came to represent blacks in mainstream electoral politics. These included J. Raymond Jones, the first black to lead the Tammany machine; Bertram Baker, New York's first black state assemblyman; and MacDonald "Mac" Holder, Brooklyn's preeminent power broker for over half a century. Observers usually credit this political action to the newcomers' Afro-British heritage, and there is something to this. The British, because of their small numbers in the islands, always needed a buffer between themselves and the unusually rebellious mass of blacks. So, from the days of slavery, the "colored" middle groups developed a racial broker tradition, one which they may well have transported to America. (In any case, the West Indian experience in the U.S. fits a larger pattern. Small outsider groups have historically played an intermediary role in tightly segregated plural societies. For example, a disproportionate number of African leaders have come from small tribes. And the Chinese minority played the same buffer role in Malaysia and Indonesia until the larger native groups woke up politically and booted them out.)

In America, native blacks woke up to mainstream politics in the '60s and gave the West Indians the boot. But West Indians of the first wave influenced radical black politics and cultural life as well, giving voice to the pent-up rage of African Americans against the racist system. They owned New York's leading black newspaper, and many West Indians influenced the Harlem renaissance, the Jamaican Claude McKay being the most famous. Another Jamaican, Marcus Garvey, led the first mass movement of urban black Americans through his separatist, back-to-Africa group, the Universal Negro Improvement Association. And up to the mid-'40s nearly all prominent black communists and labor leaders were West Indian. The late, great West Indian intellectual C.L.R. James was for several years America's leading Trotskyite theoretician, working under the pseudonym J.R. Johnson.

The West Indian cultural background helps to explain this radical legacy. Caribbean radicalism has roots in an endless series of slave revolts, a tradition continued after emancipation in the great peasant revolt in Jamaica in 1865 and the plantation riots of the 1930s. Partly this was due to the majority status of blacks in the islands and their greater sense of racial dignity. But, ironically, it was also due to the limited but unwittingly subversive nature of British colonial education itself. The British not only relied on a cadre of trained blacks to man the lower ranks of the civil service and teaching profession in the Caribbean but, with classic imperial nerve, singled out West Indians—especially Barbadians—to act as teachers, missionaries and lower-level imperial agents in colonial Africa. This strategy resembled their use of small Asian groups in the pacification of Southeast Asia.

The technique worked well enough in Africa, but it backfired in the Caribbean. Not only did radical strains in British thought take root among West Indian intellectuals like C.L.R. James, but the imperial mystique itself was absorbed and turned on its head. The grandiosity of Marcus Garvey, who, in his British Raj costume and Victorian feathered hat, planned to take African Americans on what was, in essence, an imperial conquest of Africa, was, in the sublimely absurd custom of the islands, simply a West Indian saturnalia gone awry, in which the colonial mimic decided to live his role for real.

These two great traditions of West Indian politics—the moderate interracial broker and the militant racialist invert—are apotheosized in Colin Powell and Louis Farrakhan. It is no accident that Farrakhan's first career was that of a calypsonian called "The Charmer." (Given Powell's lifelong love of calypso it is not unlikely that he once saw Farrakhan perform on a calypso stage.) Calypso is the essence of the Carnival, the music

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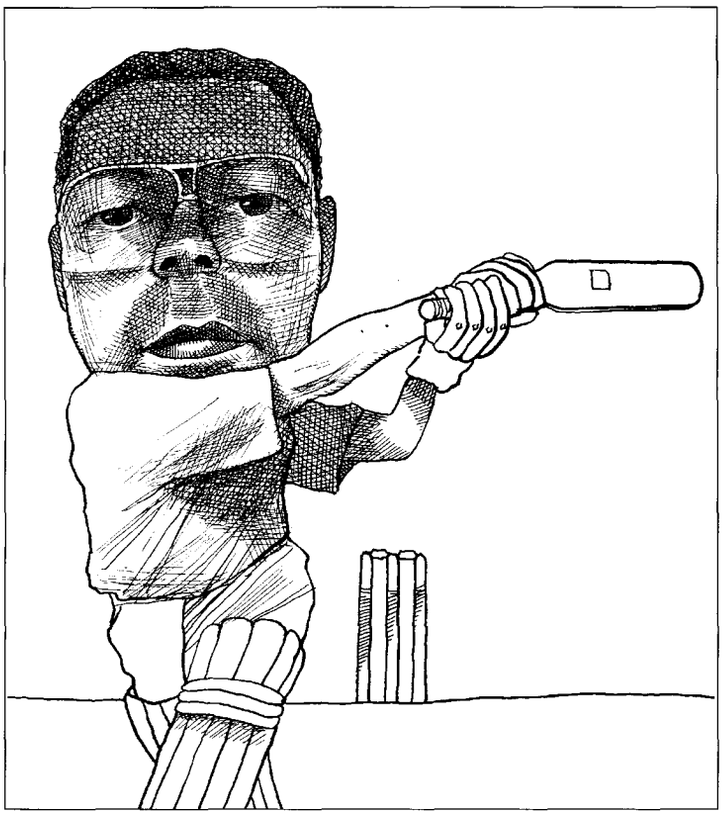
of inversion. Farrakhan's social conservatism and inordinate pride in his half-learned classical violin are pure Anglo West Indian, his plans for the resurrection of black patriarchy represent male West Indian compensation against the Caribbean's formidably independent women, and his mystifying numerology comes straight out of the West Indian preaching tradition. And, when Farrakhan reaches for a religious metaphor, it is not to the Koran that he turns but, compulsively, to the book drummed into his subconscious as a youth: the Bible—King James edition.

Given the subjective definition of ancestry, it is hard to say how many West Indians live in the United States today. The sociologist Mary Waters, a leading researcher on Caribbeans in the U.S., suspects that the less successful, especially the troubled offspring of more recent, proletarian migrants to the inner cities, are more inclined to identify themselves as black Americans. And we have no good estimate of the large number of undocumented West Indians. A highly conservative recent estimate suggests that, as of 1990, at least 6 percent of the black population—approximately 2 million persons—are of black, non-Hispanic, Caribbean origin, of whom 86 percent are foreign born. One can safely increase this figure by a third to take account of the large number of illegal migrants, as well as temporary farm workers and documented non-migrants, many of whom end up as illegal residents. This high ratio of foreign to native born reflects the immigrant flow's rapid increase over the past three decades. It stands in sharp contrast to the final decades of the first wave, during which American-born West Indians such as Powell constituted about half of all those claiming Caribbean ancestry.



COLIN POWELL BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

About two-thirds of American blacks of island ancestry come from the Anglophone West Indies, Jamaicans being by far the single largest group (29 percent). Haitians now rank second (19 percent) and those from the Hispanic Caribbean third (16 percent). Because they are among the most highly concentrated populations in the United States, West Indians represent a major component of the black population in states like New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts. Almost half of all blacks from the Caribbean live in New York, making up 30 percent of the state's black population; the second-largest group, some 17 percent, lives in Florida; 7 percent are in New England, mainly Massachusetts, where they make up nearly a third of the state's black population. In all, over 80 percent live in the New England, Middle Atlantic and South Atlantic regions.

Is there any truth to the common view that they represent a black success story? According to the black conservative Thomas Sowell, not only is their success well attested to by the Census data, it is evidence that racism insufficiently explains African Americans' economic plight. Rather, in Sowell's view, their West Indian attitudes and values—hard work, familism, love of education, all celebrated in Powell's autobiography—provide the explanation.

Sowell's thesis has generated heated debate. All sorts of statistical maneuvers have been marshaled by the "Racism-Forever" cadre of social scientists to prove that there is no exception to the iron grip of race in American life. According to economist Kristin Butcher, the proper comparison group for West Indians is not the average African American but only those blacks who have migrated from one state to another (as if nearly all African Americans were not already internal migrants). This done, the West Indian advantage vanishes. Racism's got them, too! The demographer Suzanne Model, however, although sympathetic to the argument, could not replicate Butcher's claim. Her view is that West Indians, especially those of the second and third generations, historically earned much more than other African Americans. This she explains partly by their unusually high rates of labor force participation (especially among immigrant women) and partly by their greater number of years in school. But, by 1990, African Americans in New York had closed both the income and educational gaps: the racism model still worked.

The problem with the racism model, however, is that its findings apply only to New York in aggregate, and, given the extremely heterogeneous nature of the West Indian populations there today, generalizations are

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highly questionable. West Indians of the first wave, such as those who live in Queens and in the Williamsbridge-Wakefield area of the Bronx where Powell grew up, continue to be solidly middle class, and their children are found disproportionately in the best public schools. Children of the new wave, whose parents come disproportionately from the lowest end of West Indian societies, are disproportionately found in the city's worst schools and, as a result, suffer the same problems that plague their African American underclass peer group.

The best recent study of the national data, done by Dutch sociologist Matthijs Kalmijn, unequivocally argues that West Indians in America *have* experienced disproportionate success. Far from assimilating to African American disadvantage, as the Racism-Forever analysts claim, Kalmijn shows that West Indians continue to have substantially higher annual incomes, more prestigious jobs, considerably greater returns to schooling than African Americans and on many indices practically reach a par with whites.

Sowell, therefore, has his facts about West Indians right. But his explanation is still questionable. It is not mainly the home-country values of West Indians that account for their economic success: otherwise the islands would be economic miracles. What counts is the highly selective nature of the migration process itself. Powell is right to attribute his own, and his group's, success to the ethic of work and family. But his parents were exceptional Jamaicans—both in the values they held and in the strength of their commitment to them—and it was these exceptional Jamaicans who continually chose to migrate. Those left behind tell a different story: Jamaican family life is today in even greater trouble than is African American.

Do these values that produce success still exist among the post-'60s wave of Caribbean immigrants? Philip Kasinitz, who recently studied West Indians in New York, has an attractive account of what is taking place. The new wave came just as formal segregation laws were abolished, opening up many residential areas previously denied to blacks. The result has been the rapid growth of West Indian neighborhoods very similar, in his view, to the classic old Euro-American ethnic communities. Ironically, just as the West Indians became a major demographic presence in the city, they lost their grip on mainstream city politics as African Americans took over that role. Instead, argues Kasinitz, West Indians are increasingly turning to classic ethnic politics. A new breed of politicians represents distinctly West Indian—as opposed to African American—interests. While West Indian politicians in the first wave deliberately muted their West Indianness in their public life, they now emphasize it in order to mobilize this rapidly growing ethnic turf.

It's certainly true that some West Indian activists are now desperately trying to replicate the familiar American ethnic route to local political power. But I don't think they stand a chance of success. This is not because West Indians are inherently skeptical of politicians as Kasinitz and others argue; they are doing a pretty good job of it in England, and the new wave of immigrants come, if anything, from politically overheated democratic polities seemingly ripe for ethnic mobilization. But rather, current migration takes place in a radically new context which largely obviates the need for ethnic politics.

This context—call it the West Atlantic system—is thoroughly enmeshing the fate of the Caribbean with that of the United States. It is itself merely one part of America's transformation into a global, post-industrial polity. The West Atlantic system is a circular flow of social, demographic and economic forces embracing the Caribbean archipelago and the eastern United States. The flow of American capital, technology and mass culture to the islands, far from promoting self-sustained national development—as was once innocently hoped—has thoroughly disrupted their traditional economies and cultures and is, in fact, the main reason for the current mass migration to America. The sad truth is that these island economies are, in the long run, simply not viable—they are too small, too poor in natural resources and too close to America's overwhelming post-industrial culture. They are, de facto, already part of NAFTA, and it's only a matter of time before they are de jure.

But the people of the Caribbean aren't waiting. In the migratory process, they have created a wholly new set of human communities: genuinely transnational social systems that exist equally in both the U.S. and the Caribbean. West Indian culture, especially that of Jamaica and Barbados, can no longer be identified exclusively with the islands. Instead, it is post-national—found partly in New York, partly in Florida and to a lesser extent in Toronto. People move freely between these different locations while remaining within a transnational community. And they move at all levels. West Indian elites are endlessly mobile, with homes and bank accounts all over the West Atlantic, and the West Indian peasantry is easily the most-traveled lower class on earth. Peasant higglers and hawkers who only a decade or so ago bartered yams and sweet potatoes now think nothing of pooling their resources, chartering a plane and flying off to Florida, Panama or Hong Kong to buy their merchandise, which they then sell in any of Jamaican culture's different enclaves—either in North America or on the island itself.

This post-national context renders old models of ethnic community and politics irrelevant to West Indians living in the U.S. Caribbean Americans have seen the coming of the global economy as clear as the waters of Negril and, molded by historical insecurity into masters of survival, they have positioned themselves a step ahead of the game. Did Colin Powell's decision to eschew the siren song of electoral politics result from a similar survival instinct? Maybe it was the West Indian in him. •

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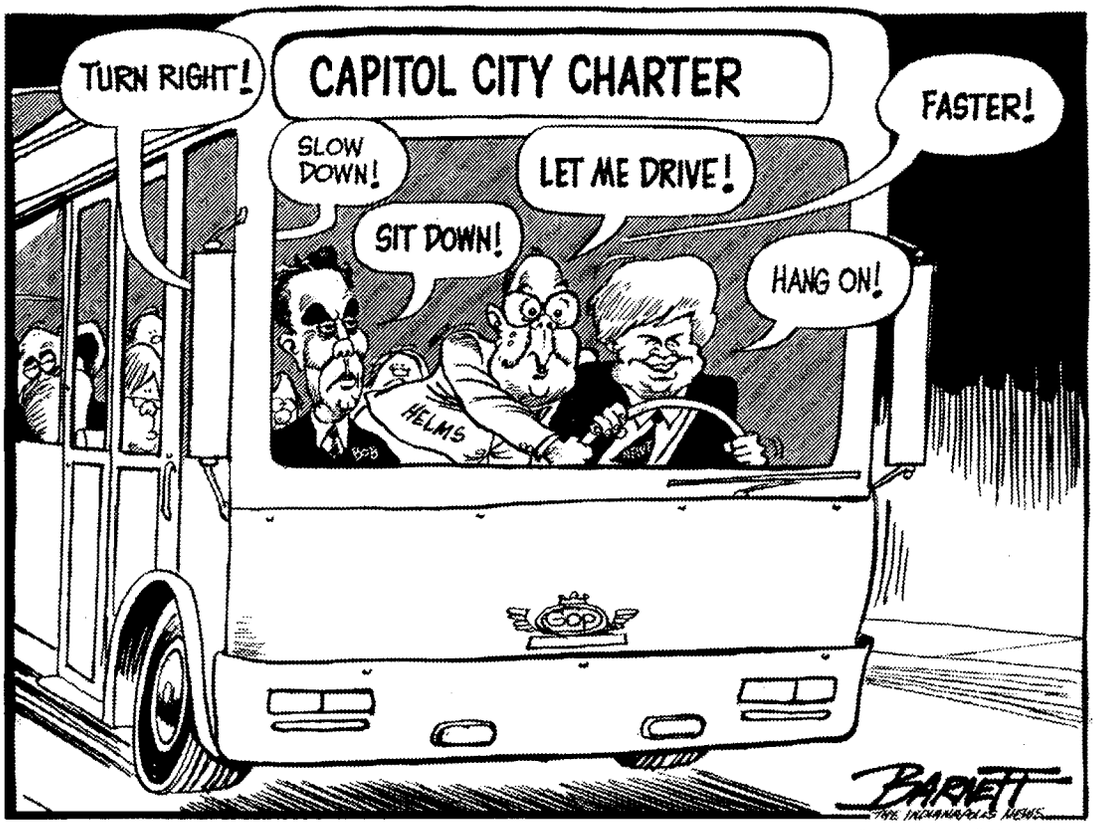

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Return of a Trouble

A specter is haunting Europe—again. It hasn't been visible for a while, in any really threatening way, but it's beginning to threaten once more.

That specter is dubbing, the imposition of English dialogue on foreign films. The last strong campaign for this practice was in 1961 when the then film critic of *The New York Times* spearheaded a drive whose slogan was "Subtitles Must Go." The opponents, including myself, did not maintain that subtitles are a visual boon, only that they are very much the better of the two practices. Whatever the reason for the campaign's fizzle, it fizzled. Now it's boiling up again.

A front-page story in *Variety* of October 23-29 reports that several major French distributors are itching to dub their successful films into English. A recent effort, a dubbed French comedy, was tested in the U.S. and failed, but the French are not discouraged. They argue that every country in the world except Britain and America sees foreign films dubbed in the local language, so why shouldn't we? No one has pointed out that every country in the world except the U.S. and Britain produces opera in the local language. Recent opera changes here are not toward translation but toward supertitles. Still, the opera argument probably wouldn't carry much weight in this arena.

Naturally the French film industry wants a bigger share of the American market than subtitled films can get. Naturally American distributors are not keen on the idea, which is really a kind of tribute to the economic soundness of the French plan: apparently Americans think that dubbed foreign films *could* get a bigger share of the domestic market. And, quite possibly, the Americans scent that underneath the business logic of the French argument is an appetite for revenge—vengeance for the increasing American domination of the French market.

The dubbing of foreign films in every country except the U.S. and U.K. certainly is the standard practice. This means that every English-speaking film actor in the world is schizoid. For just one instance, there is the James Cagney we know and the Cagney known in Italy. Forty years ago I went to a Cagney film in Rome and came out stunned. That film was tacit, insidious science fiction. Half of an actor's fullness had been sliced off and a different half pasted on. Because of this technological intervention, no one in Italy, or any other country, would ever really know Cagney. I immediately thought, and have been thinking ever since, how lucky I was to know the whole Nikolai Cherkassov and Vittorio De Sica and Françoise Rosay—the list is infinitely extensible. The intrusion of subtitles seems a small price to pay for the memory of those voices, of those whole actors.

Merchandise and marketing are key forces in the film world and, whether called so or not, acknowledged or not, have always been so. (Orson Welles once said that anyone who talks about film and doesn't mention money is a jackass.) But within this cosmos of hustling and bustling, a few values have persisted—maybe only by good luck, but, after all, luck is as much a factor of life as any other. The best American film audience has been lucky so far in this matter of dubbing. Nowadays money pressures are greater than they have ever been, and maybe the intelligent viewer's luck is running out.

Maybe we are moving into digitalized times when the concept of acting in the traditional sense will seem as quaint and special as the portrait versus the photograph. Maybe in these days when decomposition and recomposition of images is just a matter of pushing buttons and when the manufacture of voices lies at technicians' fingertips, the real, if hidden, stars of films will be computer analysts and programmers.

Well, it has its funny side, I suppose. Programmer A composes actors in a certain style, Programmer B in another. Present-day rivalry between actors would give way to rivalry between programmers. Maybe programmers would have their own fan clubs.

But couldn't we wait a little while, please, for these developments, funny though they might be? Please.

Speaking of laughs: Woody Allen has filed another petition in bankruptcy. Last time it was *Bullets Over Broadway*, which virtually declared that he hadn't been able to cook up any ideas of his own and had been thinking about Damon Runyon. Now it's **Mighty Aphrodite** (Miramax), which in one way derives from Mel Brooks and in another from numberless comedies about hookers.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Clockers. *Drug-dealing, murder, aspiration in Brooklyn, given a visual lift by Spike Lee's pyrotechnics. (Reviewed 10/2/95)* **Devil in a Blue Dress.** *Denzel Washington heads a mostly black cast in this crime thriller set in L.A. Best aspect: its view of Watts in 1948, seventeen years before the explosion. (10/30/95)* **Les Misérables.** *An enjoyable mess. Claude Lelouch's screenplay blends a modern Jean Valjean with Hugo's and with a film of Hugo—to no perceptible point, but it all looks great; and the cast headed by Jean-Paul Belmondo is splendid. (11/20/95)* **A Month by the Lake.** *Vanessa Redgrave. A mild little 1937 English romance set in Italy. But ... Vanessa Redgrave. (10/23/95)*—**SK**

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Allen has apparently been inspired by Brooks to use a historical period as a locus for modern jokes. Remember Brooks's Robin Hood picture and others. Allen uses a Greek chorus, in the ruins of a Greek theater, to comment on the life of a New York sportswriter named Lenny Winerib. (But Brooks didn't invent this clash-of-periods gag. Very few undergraduate revues have not used it.) The first time that the chorus, chanting gravely, mentions Lenny's name, it's worth a chuckle. Then the gag quickly gets heavier and heavier, and by the time the chorus is singing and dancing "You Do Something to Me" and "When You're Smiling," it's borscht-belt shtick in excelsis.

Here's how the hooker stuff is brought in. Allen and his wife adopt a baby boy, and when the boy is about 4, Allen, for no other reason than that the plot needs nourishing, decides to learn the identity of his boy's natural mother. He follows clues and finds her—a comely Manhattan hooker. He doesn't say why he has looked her up, and she treats him as one more john; so he keeps learning more about his boy's mother than he wants to know, though, for a time at least, he doesn't employ her professionally.

Well, even the hooker jokes might amuse, tired as they are, if Allen could act. No, let's not fantasize—if, say, Robin Williams had played the part. But Allen's acting, which was always poor, is very manifestly getting worse as he ages. In fact, there's an inverse ratio: as his directing has improved, his acting has collapsed further. Here he gives us just an endless series of semaphoric arm-wavings plus superficial face-makings, accompanied of course by his perennial stammerings and whinings.

His performance is so ghastly that it's almost unfair to criticize the screenplay with him in it; still, even if someone competent had played the part, the happy knitting-up of the various plot strands at the finish would make the most facile Hollywood romances look like Tolstoy.

As Allen has often done, he has recruited a good foreign actor for this cast. Here it's Helena Bonham Carter of *Howards End*, who does well with an American accent and does her best with the inane part of Allen's wife. That fine actress Claire Bloom is briefly visible in the background of some scenes, playing Allen's mother-in-law. Mira Sorvino, as the hooker, has some humor and appeal, but I hope that her peanut-whistle Melanie Griffith voice is not the only one she has. •

The Road Taken

BY DEREK WALCOTT

Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays edited by Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson

(Library of America, 1,036 pp., $35)

On that gusting day of the inauguration of the young emperor, the sublime Augustan moment of a country that was not just a republic but also an empire, no more a homespun vision of pioneer values but a world power, no figure was more suited to the ceremony than Robert Frost. He had composed a poem for the occasion, but he could not read it in the glare and the wind, so instead he recited one that many had heard and perhaps learned by heart.

> The land was ours before we were the land's.
> She was our land more than a hundred years
> Before we were her people.

This was the calm reassurance of American destiny that provoked Tonto's response to the Lone Ranger. No slavery, no colonization of Native Americans, a process of dispossession and then possession, but nothing about the dispossession of others that this destiny demanded. The choice of poem was not visionary so much as defensive. A Navajo hymn might have been more appropriate: the "ours" and the "we" of Frost was not as ample and multihued as Whitman's tapestry, but something as tight and regional as a Grandma Moses painting, a Currier and Ives print, strictly New England in black and white.

By then as much an emblem of the Republic as any rubicund senator with his flying white hair, an endangered species like a rare owl, there was the old poet who, between managing the fluttering white hair and the fluttering white

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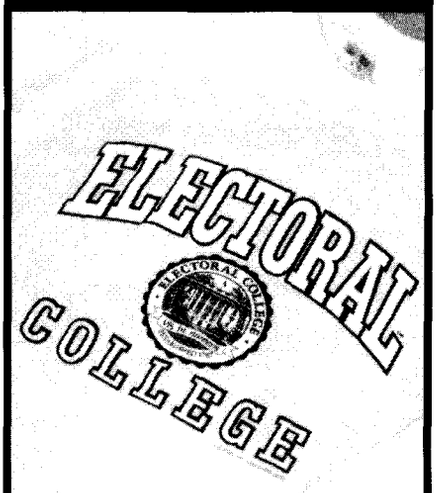

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paper, had to recite what sounded more like an elegy than a benediction. "The land was ours before we were the land's" could have had no other name, not only because he was then in his old age, but because all his spirit and career, like Thomas Hardy's, lurched toward a wintry wisdom.

Robert Frost: the icon of Yankee values, the smell of wood smoke, the sparkle of dew, the reality of farmhouse dung, the jocular honesty of an uncle.

Why is the favorite figure of American patriotism not paternal but avuncular? Because uncles are wiser than fathers. They have humor, they keep their distance, they are bachelors, they can't be fooled by rhetoric. Frost loved playing the uncle, relishing the dry enchantment of his own voice, the homely gravel in the throat, the keep-your-distance pseudo-rusticity that suspected every stranger, meaning every reader. The voice is like its weather. It tells you to stay away until you are invited. Its first lines, in the epigraph to this new edition, are not so much invitations as warnings.

> I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
> I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
> (And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
> I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too.

From the very epigraph, then, the surly ambiguities slide in. Why "I may"? Not for the rhyme, the desperation of doggerel, but because of this truth: that it would take too long to watch the agitated clouded water settle, that is, for as long as patience allows the poet to proceed to the next line. (Note that the parentheses function as a kind of container, or bank, or vessel, of the churned spring.) The refrain, "You come too." An invitation? An order? And how sincere is either? That is the point of Frost's tone, the authoritative but ambiguous distance of a master ironist.

Frost is an autocratic poet rather than a democratic poet. His invitations are close-lipped, wry, quiet; neither the voice nor the metrical line has the open-armed municipal mural expansion of the other democratic poet, Whitman. The people in Frost's dramas occupy a tight and taciturn locale. They are not part of Whitman's parade of blacksmiths, wheelwrights made communal by work. Besieged and threatened, their virtues are as cautious and measured as the scansion by which they are portrayed.

Many of the uncollected poems in the Library of America volume are negligible, but only because they pale beside the triumph of the best and familiar Frost. They neither add to nor detract from the reputation. There is a hefty representation of them and, like all the famous whose every fragment is hoarded by the academy, Frost has to pay for his fame with certain embarrassments, such as this verse from 1890:

> The 'tzin quick springeth to his side,
> His mace he hurls on high,
> It crasheth through the Spanish steel,
> And Leon prone doth lie.

and:

> When I was young we dwelt in a vale
> By a misty fen that rang all night,
> And thus it was the maidens pale

Through the Wordsworthian vocabulary of "Upon each grove and mead," to the ambulatory reflection on the pastoral sublime, the evolving Frost is predictable, dutiful as the early Keats is to Milton, to what is expected of the nature poet. First, there is the generic blur, and then, as in John Clare, the haze lifts and leaf and stone are magnified in detail like grass after a rain-shower. We rattle the box for gems among the dud stones and find "Genealogical" and "The Middletown Murder" and this early one (c. 1890s) which is equal in steadiness to middle Frost:

> The reason of my perfect ease
> In the society of trees
> Is that their cruel struggles pass
> Too far below my social class
> For me to share them or be made
> For what I am and love afraid.

And there is the early debt to Hardy:

> Those stones out under thelow-limbed tree
> Doubtless bear names that the mosses mar.

By technical convention and even in tone, the poet of *A Boy's Will* is an English poet, not a New England poet, an exiled Georgian, already skillful in the springing resilience of his verses and the measured plot of harmony and homily in their stanzas. There are signs of that cunning of adaptation, of seizure, that great poets show in their ambition, the way Eliot shamelessly raided La Forgue; and so we can watch Frost stalking Hardy through shadowy woods, keeping his own distance, but measuring his own hesitancy until he takes his own road, which will diverge from Hardy and the English pastorialists, and hits his own stride, this jocular stride of the open road apparent in W.H. Davies, in Whitman, in "Two Tramps in Mud Time."

In 1912, when he was 38, Frost left Boston with his family for England, to devote himself to writing. He submitted *A Boy's Will*, his first collection, to the English publisher David Nutt, and it was accepted. He lived in a cottage in Buckinghamshire. In London, at Harold Munro's Poetry Bookshop, he met the poet F.S. Flint, who introduced him to Ezra Pound. Pound gave *A Boy's Will* a good review because, for all his aggressive cosmopolitanism and campaigning for the classics and "the new," Pound was as much a vernacular regional poet as Frost, and the genuine Americanness of Frost must have stirred a patriotic claim in him as much as the tonal authenticity of Eliot did. He derided the falsely modern and saw a classic shape in Frost that made "it" (poetry) new by its directness and its vigor: Frost's writing achieved a vernacular elation in tone not with the cheap device of dialect spelling or rustic vocabulary, but with a clean ear and a fresh eye. (Pound found the same qualities in Hemingway.) And Yeats told Pound that *A Boy's Will* was "the best poetry written in America for a long time." The judgment remains right.

It was in England, in discussions with Flint and T.E. Hulme, that Frost clarified his direction by "the sounds of sense with all their irregularity of accent across the regular beat of the metre." Pound's encouragement—or better, his papal benediction—turned into belligerence. Frost calls Pound a "quasi-friend" and writes: "He says I must write something much more like *vers libre* or he will let me perish by neglect. He really threatens." He worries that Pound's good review of *North of Boston* will describe him as one of Pound's "party of American literary refugees." (Later, down the years, down their different roads, Frost petitioned against Pound's imprisonment, even if he was enraged at the award of the Bollingen prize to him; and Pound himself had no choice but to recognize the syntactical variety in Frost's verse, the *vers libre* within the taut frame.)

Frost's early mastery of stress looks natural. A deftness, like a skipping stone, evades the predictable scansion by a sudden parenthesis, by a momentarily forgotten verb—"that laid the swale in rows ... and scared a bright green snake," and shifting, dancing caesuras.

> Anything more than the truth would have
> seemed too weak
> To the earnest love that laid the swale in
> rows,
> Not without feeble-pointed spikes of
> flowers
> (Pale orchises), and scared a bright green
> snake.

Yet the dialogue of the dramatic poems is boxed in by a metrical rigid-

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ity that, strangely enough, is more stiff-backed than the narration, perhaps because these poems are thought of as one element of the whole poem rather than as theater, where narration recedes in the presence of action and the variety of individual voices solidifies the contradictions of melody character by character. "The Death of the Hired Man" and others are poems, and not plays, for this reason: the voice of characters and their creator is one voice, Frost's, and one tone, something nearer to complaint and elegy than vocal conflict, the tragic edge instead of tragedy. It's as if all his characters were remembering poems by Robert Frost. From "A Hundred Collars":

> "It's business, but I can't say it's not fun.
> What I like best's the lay of different farms,
> Coming out on them from a stretch of
> woods,
> Or over a hill or round a sudden corner.
> I like to find folks getting out in spring,
> Raking the dooryard, working near the
> house."

A certain deadening of the ear had dated dramatic verse since the Victorians, who tried to resuscitate Elizabethan and Jacobean drama through the pentameter, prolonging a hollow, martial echo that could not render the ordinary and domestic, that did not take into account the charged and broken syntax of Webster or the late Shakespeare. The same reverential monody occurred in Victorian epic poetry. The Elizabethan echo had become part of the soaring architecture, a determination to be sublime that again divided the lyric from the dramatic voice, that took poetry away from the theater and back into the library. Frost felt that in New England he was being offered an unexplored, un-uttered theater, away from the leaves of libraries, in a natural setting rich with stories and characters.

We think of Frost's work in theatrical terms, with the poet, of course, as its central character, mocking his crises, his stopping at a crossroads, but also because of the voices in the poems. These voices are American, but their meter is not as subtly varied as the lyrical and yet colloquial power of his own meditations. To read the "Masques," at least for this reader, is a duty, not a delight. One keeps wishing that they were plays, not theatrical poems. The vocabulary grows ornate:

> The myrrh tree gives it. Smell the rosin
> burning?
> The ornaments the Greek artificers
> Made for the Emperor Alexius . . .
> And hark, the gold enameled nightingales
> Are singing.

The line is sometimes unspeakable:

> You poor, poor swallowable little man.

The humor is arch:

> Job: But, yes, I'm fine, except for now and
> then
> A reminiscent twinge of rheumatism.

"Vulgarity," the gift that comes from the mob, which great poetic dramatists possess, no matter how sublime their rhetoric, and which they need in order to force a single response from an audience, springs from the vernacular, from the oral rather than the written, and is based on popular banalities of humor and pathos—this power is what separates, say, Browning from Shakespeare, this eagerness to entertain, to put it crassly. With his own gifts of the vernacular and of self-dramatization, Frost might be expected to have produced a wide, popular theater, since the tone of American speech was ready and resolved. And yet, for all his winking and his intimacy, Frost is a very private poet.

When we imagine the single voice of Frost behind the lines, it is the sound of a personal vernacular, but heard as dialogue. The vernacular petrifies into the monodic, perhaps because the dramatic poem (is there a single really successful example in literature?) is a kind of mule, like the prose poem, and like the "Masques." The contradiction of any masque is the pitch of its diction; it is not meant to be acted, but heard. Frost's theatrical dialogue has a monodic drone. Yeats, who in the beginning of his theatrical career was as dutiful to the pentameter as Frost remained, finally broke away from it vehemently and triumphantly in "Purgatory," and he did so with a rapid and common diction that came from the pub and the street, until the lyric and dramatic pitch were one sound, as it is with the Jacobeans. In Frost's poetical theater, the diction becomes stately, working almost against the accent. It was not a betrayal or a defeat but a matter of temperament. Frost's temperament was too hermetic for the theater.

But something wonderful, revolutionary within the convention, happened to Frost's ear between *A Boy's Will* and *North of Boston*. He wrote American, without vehement challenge. He wrote free or syllabic verse within the deceptive margins of the pentameter. He played tennis, to use his famous description, but you couldn't see the net; his caesuras slid with a wry snarl over the surface, over the apparently conventional scansion.

> Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

appears, to eye and ear, to be:

> Some/thing/there is/that doesn't/love/
> a wall,

That is certainly how it would sound in English, to the Georgian ear. But think American. In that diction, parody is the basis of pronunciation, and there is only one caesura:

> Something there is / that doesn't love a
> wall,

That rapid elision or slur of the second half of the line is as monumental a breakthrough for American verse as any experiment by Williams or cummings. It dislocates the pivot of traditional scansion; and the consequence is seismic but inimitable, because it is first of all Frost's voice, which in meter is first regional, then generic, eventually American. This happened with equal force to Yeats, but with Frost it is more alarming, since Yeats contracted the pentameter to octosyllabics for propulsion's sake, for "that quarrel with others which we call rhetoric," for the purposes of political passion, but Frost achieved this upheaval within the pentameter. He accomplished it, that is, without making his meter as wry and sarcastic as Williams, or as pyrotechnic as cummings, or as solemn and portentous as Stevens.

Once that confidence sprung to hand and voice there was no other road for Frost but greatness, a greatness not of ambition but of vocation:

> Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
> And sorry I could not travel both
> And be one traveler. . .

I am quoting from memory, which is the greatest tribute to poetry, and with some strain I could probably copy from the dictation of memory not only this poem but also several other poems of Frost's. For interior recitation, usually of complete poems, not only of lines or stanzas, Frost and Yeats, for their rhythm and design, are the most memorable poets of the century.

To fight against a predictable tone of incantation was a great task for the American. Yeats could ride the lilt and history of a long tradition. Frost was truly alone, and many of the poems dramatize his own singularity—not the romantic image of the neglected poet in a materialist society but the American romance of the pioneer, the inventor, the tinkerer (if the pentameter wasn't broken, why fix it?), who knows the rational needs of that society, one of which is the practicality of poetry, its workday occupation, the fusion of commerce and art, of carpentry and metrical composition, the "song of

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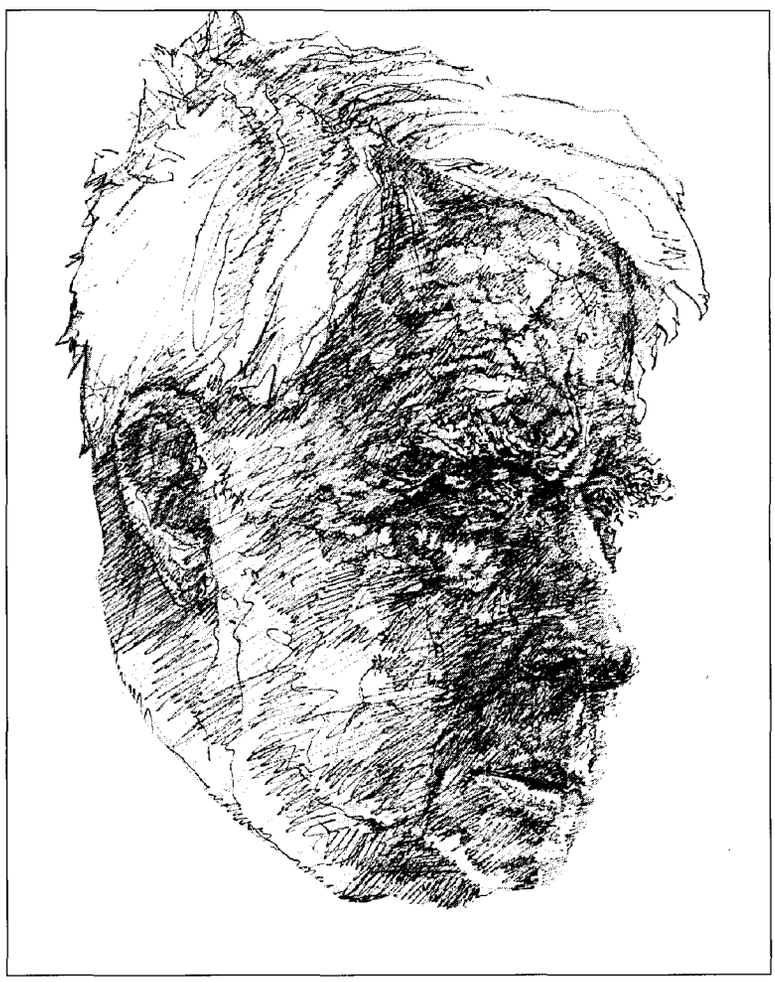
the open road." Whitman's vagabondage is romantic, perhaps even irresponsible. Frost stays put, close to stone walls, under apple orchards, mowing grass, his view of the republic a blue haze of hills, rigidly Horatian.

There was never a sound beside the wood
but one,
And that was my long scythe whispering to
the ground.

In formal verse, tension creates memory, the taut lines between the poles of the margins, and shape is as much a cause of that tension as stanzas and their breathing spaces, also carefully measured between the stanza patterns. Stanzaic structure creates anticipation; and the verbal music, by its chords, its elisions, its caesuras, delights the ear when expectation is confirmed, but with additional surprise. This is the masterly delight of Dickinson, "the slant of light," her assonant obliquities in slant-rhymes. But this is a technique which Frost rarely uses. His rhymes are rich, and unsurprising; it is their thought, their argument, what he calls "reason," that delights us. The tension that we enjoy in Frost is that of another slant or viewpoint at what was once ordinary, its melodious sarcasm.

Now I am old my teachers
are the young.
What can't be molded must
be cracked and sprung.
I strain at lessons fit to start
a suture.
I go to school to youth to
learn the future.



ROBERT FROST BY DAVID SCHORR FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

North of Boston consists of monologues and narrative pieces, dialogues in a fixed landscape, with its subterranean terror of madness as in "A Servant to Servants," destitution in "The Death of the Hired Man," black humor in "Blueberries," infant mortality in "Home Burial," and best of all "The Fear." But the metronomic rhythm of their dialogue, the inflexible morality, these pinched tragedies in which their narrow lives are seeped, can tire attention. Something mean, sour and embittered, like the late mulch of November soil, rises from the pages and disturbs us with the kind of punishment that a tireless gossip demands of his hearer. This is a mercilessly moral climate that produces attic idiots and witch-hunters.

It terrifies the outsider in its eccentric smugness; but this may be the legendary severity of the North as surely as a lyric mania and a corrupt languor are the legendary climate of the South. (From Frost to Faulkner.) With *Mountain Interval,* the lyric freshness of the temperature of a brook in spring pours with the usual clarity over its stone nouns. Or, like cows homing at dusk for the barns, they head for the open door of anthologies—"Two Tramps at Mud Time," "An Old Man's Winter Night," "The Oven Bird," "Birches"—slapped on their haunches to ruminate in their fragrant stalls.

Frost is Whitman's heir in the magnification of close domestic objects and creatures, the "noiseless, patient spider" of his writing hand, a Protestant quality, pragmatic and commonplace as a Dutch interior, the "slant of light" that his other progenitrix, Dickinson, contemplated. The same slant that requires the imagination to honor and to record the oblique, as the great Dutch kitchen painters did, came naturally to Frost's sense of composition and balance. The "slant of light" is also a figure of irregular scansion within the frame of the window of the poem, in which the human subject is stilled by the angled light into vacancy and reflection.

Fall approaches, and with the fall, the poetry of Frost, not so much in full flare like the harlequinade of Stevens, but early and late fall, the line or branch of the verse with tentative colors, then the words dropping naturally off the lines into a heap at the base of the poem's column; the mood of "bare ruined choirs," of "My November Guest." That strain of melancholy, so self-posturing in its easy metaphor unless it is dominated by an imagination that defies it, is the interior weather that Frost divined in Edward Thomas, whom he met in England and for whom he became an example and an inspiration. Frost heard the true quiet of sorrow that gleamed under Thomas's prose, a power of meditation that did not use lyricism for spiritual release but for even more unrelenting questions. Frost saw in Thomas another kind of grace, a knightly, doomed demeanor and an alarming simplicity of courage. All his gift needed was a gentle nudging into meter.

Thomas's poems are not minor Frost, and Frost would not have encouraged Thomas to write verse that was only an English rendition of his voice. He could not make an echo of the Englishman because their accents were different, and accent is scansion. Frost was closer to Georgian pastoral than Thomas could ever be to Frost's vernacular. The differences appear superficial, but they are deep. They have their particularities of posture and temperament: Frost belligerently assured, impatient with sadness, Thomas querulous and haunted by an unshakeable melancholy; the American full of aphorism and zest, the Englishman carrying a taciturn foreshadowing of his country's pastoral decline, a lament that leads us to Larkin's "And that will be England gone." Tears prickle at the openheartedness of Thomas's bewilderment, his spiritual and syntactical hes-

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itations. We owe to Frost the existence of Edward Thomas's pure poetry. An act of immortal generosity.

We are amazed at the ordinariness, even the banality, of Frost's rhymes (bird, heard), at the courage, even the gall, of the poet, rubbing such wornout coins again but somehow polishing them to a surprising sheen. This directness has danger in it, the same danger it had for Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads*; and that sensation of danger is the ground of Frost's technical courage, and our pleasure in its smiling triumph. The slant or half-rhymes of great practitioners such as Dickinson or Wilfred Owen are muted pyrotechnics; they startle, and dislocate, anticipation. But Frost's power lies in the ease with which he slides over his endings with the calm, natural authority of a wave or a gust of wind, making his rhymes, with apparent diffidence, a part of the elements, of poetry and of weather.

America likes its sages ordinary but reclusive, and without sexual passion or desire of any kind, as much as it likes them—Dickinson, Jeffers, Frost, Hopper—cynical of material progress, and the more cynical the more revered. Frost's image became one of a man whittling near an iron stove in a small country store. He played the cynical American Horace as carefully as any sophisticated celebrity or rough politician, his clauses like curled shavings, dry, crisp and parenthetical. Sometimes the wisdom can be vexing in its parochialism. Frost was the true opposite of that other sage, Robinson Jeffers. Here, indeed, were two avuncular recluses, outdoor figures, both opposed to Dickinson's confines, or caves, of parlor and chapel, one on the Pacific coast and the other on the Atlantic coast, both proffering rocky, granite-featured profiles to "the elements," one the companion of seals and spray, the other of deer and birds. They are stone heads of reassuring integrity, until we look more closely and see how frightening the cracks are in their classic, petrified composure, how alarming and even treacherous are their ambiguities of crossing shadows.

Jeffers's long line, like a wave gathering and breaking, is already an inevitable self-evident truth, a meter that gathers its reflection to break and shudder the supposed solidity of the shore of the Republic, carrying garbage in its wash sometimes, and obviously, admirably striving to achieve distance, not through any subtle domestic irritations but through the sarcasm of rage, from the hawk-height of the sublime coasting on its own serenity. This is almost a barren

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severity, like the rock coast that his meter celebrates, the diction already Sophoclean without the labor and the complexity, and utterly wanting in the vernacular humor that exists in all great poets, the raw peculiarity, even provinciality of Dante, Shakespeare and the always-colloquial Frost. The diction of Jeffers is the stillborn sublime, the majestic tone that he considers fit for a stupendous and humbling coastline. The cracks in the stone are treated as tragic flaws, not as common mistakes.

A parody of Frost, on the other hand, would use the doggerel of the greeting card. The trap is the poem, which snaps back at us and catches our fingers with the slow revelation of its betraying our sing-along into wisdom. Frost said it with less venom: "A poem begins in delight and ends in wisdom." This leaves out the turmoil, contradictions and anguish of the process, the middle of the journey.

> Whose woods these are I think I know.
> His house is in the village though;
> He will not see me stopping here
> To watch his woods fill up with snow.
>
> My little horse must think it queer
> To stop without a farmhouse near
> Between the woods and frozen lake
> The darkest evening of the year.
>
> He gives his harness bells a shake
> To ask if there is some mistake.
> The only other sound's the sweep
> Of easy wind and downy flake.
>
> The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.

And even this poem, we now know, cannot be trusted. "Whose woods these are I think I know." He does know, so why the hesitancy? Certainly, by the end of the line, he has a pretty good guess. No, the subject is not the ownership of the woods, the legal name of their proprietor, it is the fear of naming the woods, of the anthropomorphic heresy or the hubris of possession by owners and poets.

The next line, generally read as an intoned filler for the rhymes, and also praised for the regionality of that "though" as being very American, a daring, superfluous and muted parenthesis. "His house is in the village though." Why not? Why shouldn't he live in the woods? What is he scared of? Of possession, of the darkness of the world in the woods, from his safe world of light and known, named things. He's lucky, the frightened poem says, while I'm out here in the dark evening with the first flakes of snow beginning to blur my vision and causing my horse to shudder, shake its reins and ask why have we stopped. The poem darkens with terror in every homily.

The selection of letters in the Library of America edition is rewarding, but the letters are generally demure, even reticent. There is a crucial letter, however, to Lesley Frost Francis, in 1934, regarding conflicts of technique. This is the letter with the famous dictum about tennis without a net, but it is inevitable that we come across this sort of thing:

> I read that negroes were chosen to sing her opera [Gertrude Stein's] because they have less need than white men to know what they are talking about. That is a thing that can be reported without malice.

Encountering this remark in the poet's letter to his daughter, does one sidestep it as a turd in the road, or shrug it off, or condemn its author and his time, but without the shock of insult, for what else is the remark if not American? One doesn't go ravaging the privacy of family correspondence for proof of racism, and in these dangerous times, when any group can scream injury and litigate against the dead, sue History and demand compensation, the sudden encounter of Frost as a racist should be neither sudden nor shocking, but normal for a white New England poet, which is how he suddenly forces the reader of this remark to think of him. But the passage is hardly without a lasting effect. It does something, from now on, or at least for a while, to this reader's delight in Frost, a delight that may now be damaged, owing to the comprehensive honesty of this book. As one stares vacantly away from the open book, one arrives at that moment in the *Inferno* in which the poet concludes: "that day we read no further."

And yet we must read further, especially with American masters. We must read as far as the white whale draws us, beyond the tight, calendar hamlets and harbors of New England and its chapels with their harpoon spires, to a wider and more terrifying space, the elemental ocean, beyond provinciality, history, race, beyond America, beyond the sick anti-Semitic provincialities of Pound or the patriotic regionalism of Frost to a realm that only genius can depict. We must follow Moby Dick, the huge ribbed metaphor of the white whale carrying the freight of the Republic's sins as the Republic perishes in the whirlpool with a sole survivor, Melville-Ishmael, who is, despite Melville's convictions of racial superiority, a poet. Now that other races and other causes in the babel of the Republic have been given permission to speak in the very language that ruled and defined them, must everything be revised by the new order? Does Frost's ironic, jocular accent not apply to them? But it does, because the new order would be repeating the old order if it made a policy of exclusion and an aesthetics of revenge.

Pound's poetry does not absolve Pound, any more than a single phrase from a letter by Frost damns Frost forever. One groans or shudders, but one pushes on. Poetry is its own realm and does not pardon. There is nothing to forgive Frost's poetry for. There are, instead, many poems to be grateful for, so many poems, indeed, that the man, the biography, the symbol of Yankee resilience are all negligible, since poetry pronounces benediction not on the poet but the reader. A great poem is a state of raceless, sexless, timeless grace, and this book, which contains more than just a life, is too full of such benedictions for this reader not to pick it up and continue.

Skimming a great poet's life, we pause when some fact darkens and jolts the rate of the summary, clouding the passage, and we seize on something historical that corroborates a poem. But this is the wrong way to read a poem *and* a life. We know that Frost once walked all night through a swamp and transformed this into those poems of natural terror; and we know he had terrible stomach cramps as a child, that his father was an alcoholic, that "Provide, Provide" ("Too many fall from great and good / For you to doubt the likelihood.") must have been owed to the terror of destitution following the cost of burying his father when $8 was all his mother was left with, which was the circumstance that brought them East, from Pacific to Atlantic, to Lawrence, Massachusetts, and made Frost a naturalized Yankee. But there is a difference between a poem and a journal. The poems essentialize the life. The poem does not obey linear time; it is, by its belligerence or its surrender, the enemy of time; and it is, when it is true, time's conqueror, not time's servant.

The much-honored Frost fought his own petrifaction into a monument by dry, didactic humor, but he could not avoid being cherished, and the self-dismissal and wryness became a part of the act, even the melancholy. "Play melancholy autumn," his readers demanded, and however chilling the tone, the audiences roared like autumn leaves around the snow-haired figure behind the lectern, and the doctorates were showered on him, and the Pulitzers, and a tribute from the Senate on his seventy-

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A message from Negative Population Growth, Inc.

Why We Need A Smaller U.S. Population

And How We Can Achieve It

We need a smaller population in order to halt the destruction of our environment, and to create an economy that will be **sustainable** over the very long term.

We are trying to address our steadily worsening environmental problems without coming to grips with their root cause -- overpopulation.

If present immigration and fertility rates continue, our population, now over 264 million, will pass 400 million by the year 2050 -- and still be growing rapidly!

All efforts to save our environment will ultimately be futile unless we not only halt U.S. population growth, but reverse it, so that our population can eventually be stabilized at a **sustainable** level -- far lower than it is today.

The Optimum U.S. Population Size

The central issue is surely this: **At what size should we seek to stabilize U.S. population?** Unless we know in what direction we should be headed, how can we possibly devise sensible policies to get us there?

The size at which our population is eventually stabilized is supremely important because of the effect of sheer numbers of people on such vitally important national goals as a healthy environment, and a sustainable economy.

We believe these goals can best be achieved with a U.S. population in the range of 125 to 150 million, or about its size in the 1940s. This optimum size could be reached in about three to four generations if we do two things now that are well within our grasp.

How To Get There

1. **Impose restrictions on immigration** that would halt illegal immigration, and cap legal immigration at not over 100,000 per year, including all relatives, refugees and asylees. That alone would sharply slow our growth.

2. **Lower our fertility rate** (the average number of children per woman) from the present 2.0 to around 1.5 and maintain it at that level for several decades. We believe that non-coercive financial incentives will be necessary in order to reach that goal.

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Incentives to Lower Fertility

NPG proposes these incentives to motivate parents to have no more than two children:

- Eliminate the present Federal income tax exemption for dependent children born after a specified date.
- Give a Federal income tax credit **only** to those parents who have not more than two children. Those with three or more would lose the credit entirely.
- Give an annual cash grant to low income parents who pay little or no income tax, and who have no more than two children. Those with three or more children would lose the cash grant entirely.

Two Vastly Different Paths Lie Before Us

With the reductions in immigration and fertility we advocate, our nation could start **now** on the path toward a sustainable, and prosperous, population of 125 to 150 million.

Without such a program, we are almost certain to continue our mindless, headlong rush down our current path. That path is leading us straight toward catastrophic population levels that can only devastate our environment, and produce universal poverty in a crowded, polluted nation.

To learn more about NPG's recommendations for programs designed to halt, and eventually to reverse, U.S. and world population growth, write today for our **FREE BROCHURE.**

NPG is a national nonprofit membership organization founded in 1972. **We are the only organization that calls for a smaller U.S. and world population, and recommends specific, realistic measures to achieve those goals.**

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fifth birthday. He wrote in "Birches,"

> I'd like to get away from earth awhile
> And then come back to it and begin over.
> May no fate willfully misunderstand me
> And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
> Not to return.

He himself grew to resemble a bent birch, its flecked bark, its hoarse, whispering words. And he got away. He died, at the age of 89, in 1963, more of an emblem than any American poet except Whitman, having become decades earlier that pitted, apple-cheeked, snow-crested image that the country idealized in its elders, public and private, bucolic and cosmopolitan, avuncular and responsible. But this companionable and masterful collection proves that he has also remained. Here is the canonical Frost (which, in its gathering of Frost's lectures, essays and stories, shows also that he wrote great fictional prose) devotedly and richly presented by Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson in a clear and airy format that lets the print breathe, and echoes that easily parodied voice, quirky in its delights but certain of its calling.

> And then there was a wall of trees with trunks;
> After that only the tops of trees, and cliffs
> Imperfectly concealed among the leaves.
> A dry ravine emerged from under boughs
> Into the pasture.

A widower with a suicidal son who eventually succeeded in killing himself, Frost showed the scars of his devastations in his scansion, but they did not break his meter, nor pitch it into a rant that broke its disciplined confinement, for the confinement brought the discipline that his sorrow needed, nor did they abrupt it into cryptic, embittered phrases. It is perhaps this steadiness, which lasted a lifetime, that was responsible for his reputation for coldness. It was not that poetry was all that mattered, was all that he had, that made him seem cruel, but that he could close it tight in its frame like a door against foul weather, or light it, like an old lamp, against even worse weather, the black gusts that shook his soul.

DEREK WALCOTT won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992.

Pulp Fiction

BY MICHAEL WALZER

The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey edited with commentary by William J. Bennett

(Simon & Schuster, 824 pp., $30)

In the great debate about whether it is possible to teach morality, William Bennett is clearly on the affirmative side: just buy this book, read it to your children (but pay attention yourself!), and urge your friends, neighbors, workmates and business associates to do the same. If you could somehow get the book into the hands of the local drug dealer, second-story man, mugger, corrupt cop, white collar embezzler and slumlord—to read to their children—all our problems would be solved. The only difficulty will be in persuading the kids to sit still for Bennett's collection of edifying tales and homilies.

This is Bennett's second collection; I managed to avoid the first, *The Book of Virtues*, a runaway best-seller (so we should be in better shape already), but Bennett describes this one as more of the same, so I haven't looked back. The material, he says, is vast: moralizing folk-tales, nursery rhymes, fables, ditties, bits and pieces from the Bible and the Greek classics and a smaller number of carefully vetted short stories. Once upon a time, people thought that edifying tales were meant to be read again and again, but it turns out that more is better—800 pages more, in this case. If you imagined that you were already edified, you have work to do.

Bennett's point of reference is the family of ancient days, before radio and television, whose members read books aloud to one another, sitting together in the living room or beside a child's bed: the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Little Women* and so on. But he doesn't really aim to reproduce that attractive scene, for he has no confidence in books like those three. Compared to his own book they are indeed complex, morally ambiguous and dangerous—which may help to explain why people of all ages sat still for them and read them over and over again (though all my examples, I admit, had sequels).

The tales and homilies in *The Moral Compass* are short. They are mostly "adaptations" or "retellings of adaptations," and they are preceded, every one, by Bennett's "commentaries," editorial notes that tell the reader exactly what the moral message is. The adaptations and the retellings fall into an old and honorable tradition of pious simplifications for children. I am not intimately familiar with the tradition, though I once studied some seventeenth-century examples (I was writing a book on Puritan politics) and I know many twentieth-century examples; and I can't recall anything quite like Bennett's notes. The moral message, as I understand it, is supposed to be carried by the tale or homily. Maybe it is summarized at the end, in imitation of Aesop's fables, though in Aesop, readers will remember, the "moral" at the end is sometimes unexpected, a provocation rather than an uplifting summary. In Bennett's handling, there is always an uplifting summary, but it comes at the beginning—so that you won't make a mistake and ruin your children.

Actually, the tales themselves are purged of anything difficult, unexpected or provocative—that's the purpose of all the adapting and retelling—so it would be hard to get them wrong. But Bennett leaves nothing to his readers. The tales themselves are not enough, he seems to think, to rescue contemporary parents and children from the relativist morass of American life. And so he stands, like a beacon, atop each one. What use is a moral compass that isn't always pointing to the Right and the Good?

Bowdlerizing is systematic in the homiletical tradition, though Bennett, so far as I can tell, is not his own Bowdler. (Full credit is not always given.) Let's look at a useful example from the Bible, a source which is used sparingly in Bennett's book, since its compass isn't always governed by the rules of conventional morality and its realism is unremitting. But Bennett does reprint the Joseph story, to illustrate the theme of brotherly forgiveness. Joseph's brothers, to be sure, are never certain that they have been forgiven; nor are readers of the biblical story meant to be certain about that (or much else). But the moral compass does not respect authorial intention. Nor is it interested in textual versimilitude or even, as we say, in "real life."

Consider one famous episode in the Joseph story (I quote the original,

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unadapted King James, God's English): "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused.... And it came to pass about this time that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And ... when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth ... she called unto the men of the house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice.... And it came to pass that when his master heard the words of his wife ... that his wrath was kindled."

Now here is *The Moral Compass* version of this story in its entirety (it is "retold by J. Berg Essenwein and Marietta Stockard," though there is no indication of who these two were or are or what the occasion of their retelling was): "The wife of Potiphar filled her husband's mind with wicked lies concerning Joseph, and caused him to be thrown into prison."

That's it. Indeed, she wanted to lie with him and instead lied about him, which no doubt was wicked. But the biblical writer trusts his readers, young and old, with the whole story and then lets them draw their own conclusions.

Bennett's retellings are founded on distrust. And the extent of the distrust is comical; nothing is left for the reader to do except to recognize and to approve the previously announced moral message. No effort is required, even though one of Bennett's reiterated messages is that effort is *always* required. You have to "gather your courage, lower your head, and push through as best you can," he says, introducing "Scylla and Charybdis," adapted and retold from Homer's *Odyssey*. What you don't have to do (it might not work) is to figure out for yourself that that's what Homer meant to tell us.

We use a compass so as not to get lost, or to find our way when we do get lost. Bennett's compass has only the first function. His "life's journey" is a straight line. It has its problems (that's when you lower your head, and push through...), but it is never problematic; it has its sadnesses, but it is never tragic. Remember the opening lines of *Pilgrim's Progress*, when Christian, the pilgrim, receives his call and follows after the shining light: "His wife and children ... cry after him to return, but he put his fingers in his ears and ran on, crying Life! Life! eternal Life!" This is the beginning of a journey unlike anything in Bennett's book, since what Christian leaves behind when he rushes off in pursuit of salvation is a single-parent family. He has chosen God over conjugal and parental love, but *The Moral Compass* does not acknowledge conflicts of this sort. What did children think when their parents read those lines aloud? They were forced, at least, to think.

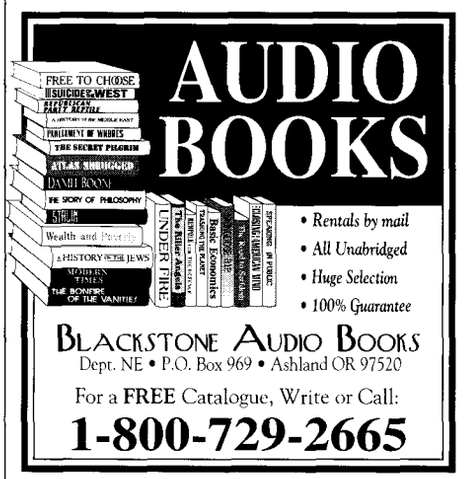
Nothing in Bennett's chapter on "Mothers and Fathers, Husbands and Wives" comes close to this. He realizes, indeed, that the theme of separation and loss is central to any discussion of love, and so he focuses on ... death. The chapter includes a retelling of the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, an adaptation of a retelling of the tale of Persephone, several similar stories from non-Western cultures, Mickey Mantle on the death of his father, the last letter of a Civil War soldier to his wife, two Ben Jonson poems on the death of a son and a daughter. (The latter is "the hardest thing," Bennett tells us in advance, "for a human being to endure," though Jonson himself asks why he should lament at all that his son has "so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage/And if no other misery, yet age?") These are all natural partings. What is wholly missing in these 110 pages on familial love is any mention of divorce or desertion—let alone godly and virtuous desertion.

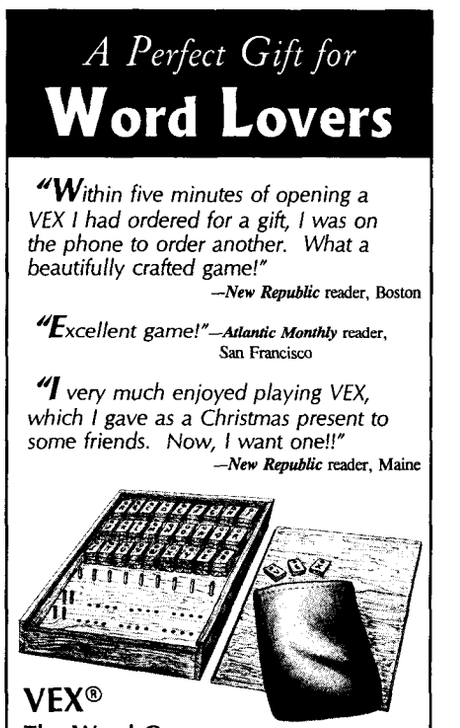
That's not quite fair. Bennett's chapter does include a lovely, bittersweet story by Raymond Carver in which a father tells his daughter about an incident in her infancy when he first came to understand what it meant to be a father. Bennett supplies the usual moralizing introduction: "This is a story about a new father who must make a choice between pleasure and responsibility, and his discovery about which of the two brings the greater and firmer happiness." So the reader is urged to miss (or did Bennett himself miss?) Carver's key lines: "But what happened? she says. I mean later.... He shrugs and carries his drink over to the window.... Things change, he says."

"Goethe once said that you must labor to possess what you have inherited. We must practice that labor today." This is Bennett's introductory note to a few pages from Tocqueville about the "pioneer family," pages that seem in fact to be about laboring to possess what you didn't inherit. Never mind. Goethe was right; but Bennett is operating from opposite assumptions, urging upon parents and children alike an inheritance that is all-too-easy to possess. And there is no way of enjoying this inheritance, in his view, without possessing it, that is, without drawing out its pious meanings.

Are you a little unsure about Edward Lear's moral message in "The Owl and the Pussy Cat"? (Maybe you don't care, maybe you just like the rhymes?) He is "showing our children the civility, respect, and joy shared in courtships and marriages." And what were the owl and the pussycat doing, before they were married, when "they sailed away for a year and a day/ To the land where the bong tree grows"? Don't ask, don't tell. As with the Carver story, so with the Lear poem. All that the reader is asked to do is repeat the message: civility, respect, joy, courtship, marriage. Our inheritance is safe.

But it is much diminished in this book. •

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Beltway Commissar

BY RICHARD PIPES

In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents by Anatoly Dobrynin

(Times Books, 672 pp., $30)

Anatoly Dobrynin was the ideal Soviet ambassador to the United States. A tall, jolly teddy bear of a man, exuding friendliness and always smiling, he was living proof of Moscow's contention that the United States and the Soviet Union had every reason to live in peace, that all the troubles between them were the work of anti-communist ideologues. As he proudly declares, the nearly quarter of a century which he spent in Washington as Soviet envoy, from 1962 to 1986, was "the longest term in such a position in Soviet and indeed the whole of Russian diplomatic history." By the time Gorbachev recalled him, Dobrynin was the dean of Washington's diplomatic corps and a star of the first magnitude in its political and social firmament. He departed for home with deep reluctance.

Born in 1919 near Moscow, Dobrynin was an aircraft engineer who was selected for the diplomatic service at the end of World War II, when Stalin decided that he would need large cadres of foreign service professionals to deal with the Western powers. He met Stalin only once. Walking through the Kremlin carrying papers for a Politburo meeting, he saw Stalin and his guards approaching along the corridor. Mortified, he flattened himself against the wall to let the Generalissimo pass. Stalin noticed his action, approached him and "stressing his words by slowly moving a finger in front of my face, he said 'Youth mustn't fear comrade Stalin. He is its friend.'" Dobrynin proved a good choice. He made a rapid career owing to an exceptional talent for establishing personal relations with foreigners and gaining their trust.

This talent was his strength and his weakness. It opened doors to the offices of the Washington power elite and to the salons of its social arbiters. Dobrynin would dine one evening with Rockefellers, the next with Harrimans, and through them meet the capital's wheeler-dealers, who soon came to view him as one of their own and to speak to him without restraint. He had a direct phone line to several presidents and a reserved parking place in the garage of the Department of State. The most powerful figures in Washington, as well as American corporate executives, sought him out to propound their views on American politics and U.S.-Soviet relations. He was thus an invaluable conduit to the American political and business establishment.

But these personal skills also blinded him to the deeper realities of politics. Judging by his memoirs, he suffered from the *déformation profesionnelle* of the career diplomat, for whom history is made by small circles of power brokers, and neither public opinion nor the legislative branch amount to much. His long residence in Washington turned the Soviet ambassador into a Beltway personality. If he ever ventured outside the capital, Dobrynin does not think it worth recording. He seems absolutely oblivious of the country at large, and so he fails to understand why the American people were mistrustful of Russia, why such actions as the invasion of Afghanistan, the crackdown on Solidarity in Poland, or the shooting down of the Korean airliner had such a deleterious effect on American-Soviet relations. In this respect, he served his Moscow superiors poorly. He fed them invaluable intelligence on rivalries in the American political establishment, but he did little to disabuse them of their notion that the American president was a "supreme ruler" and the Constitution a scrap of paper.

The decades in Washington left their mark on Dobrynin. For one thing, they imperceptibly eroded his communist convictions. He recounts that when Reagan learned that he was being recalled to Moscow to head the International Department of the Communist Party's Central Committee, the president asked with surprise: "Is he a communist?" Dobrynin insists that he was indeed a communist, having accepted "the Soviet system with its flaws and successes as a historic step in the long history" of Russia, but the assertion does not carry much conviction.

While he frequently resorts to such clichés as the "bourgeois press," "cold warriors," "counter-revolutionaries" and "hard-core anti-communists," Dobrynin shows little admiration for communist reality. With the exceptions of Andrei Gromyko and Yuri Andropov, he portrays the country's leaders as obtuse and narrow-minded provincials, prone to impulsive actions, ignorant of the world at large and even their own country. (It seems they truly believed that the entire dissident movement was organized by foreign intelligence services!) He knows next to nothing of the party's history, asserting that Lenin never contemplated expansion but relied on communism triumphing through increased labor productivity. Dobrynin also believes that Jews constituted "a good half" of the revolutionary leaders in Russia, which happens to be the figure that was bandied about by the tsarist police. Given his professed commitment to the communist cause, this (imaginary) role of Jews in the revolution that brought communism to power should be an accolade; but he somehow makes it sound like a reproach. At one point he describes the Soviet Union as "totalitarian." At bottom, he seems to have more in common with American liberals than with Soviet communists.

A long residence in the United States has imbued Dobrynin with an intellectual balance lacking in the true communist believer. Although he has not a good word for opponents of détente such as Zbigniew Brzezinski ("a vigorous and pushy academic") or Henry Jackson (who had "allied himself with Jewish organizations ... to turn the issue of Jewish emigration into a political football"), he is capable of observing and reporting with a certain degree of objectivity. Similarly, for all his loyalty to his superiors, he can be quite critical of them. This quality lends his memoirs an exceptional interest: they are, in some respects, among the most informative recollections of a high-ranking Soviet official to appear so far, even if they tell us more about Washington than Moscow.

Dobrynin was essentially the creature of Nixon and Kissinger. They picked him as a confidential link to Moscow in order to bypass the Department of State and the other branches of the United States government. He finds some fault with both men, because they misunderstood the way the Kremlin operated, attributing the powers vested in the American president in foreign policy to the General Secretary. In fact, the General Secretary required the unanimous backing of the Politburo. (According to Dobrynin, who attended many of its meetings, the Politburo

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rarely voted on any issue, arriving at decisions by consensus.)

Even so, the years 1968-73 were Dobrynin's years of glory. Nixon, obsessed with global strategy, wanted to shape relations with Moscow free of interference. This practice suited Moscow, since it marginalized American public opinion and the Congress, where détente faced considerable hostility. Co-opted by the White House, the Soviet ambassador turned into a trusted confidante. He discloses that on occasion Nixon's exchanges with Moscow were either deliberately withheld from William Rogers, the Secretary of State, or else "edited" before being shown to him. Kissinger actually warned Dobrynin to be careful when talking to Rogers, since the Secretary was not privy to everything that concerned U.S.-Soviet relations. This created a situation without precedent in diplomatic history in which the envoy of a foreign power, and a hostile power to boot, was treated as a virtual member of the presidential staff.

The most interesting revelations in Dobrynin's book tell of the confidences lavished on him by powerful and wealthy Americans. Political and business luminaries were falling over each other in their eagerness to impart to him Washington gossip and even state secrets. This information, he writes, he immediately forwarded in coded dispatches to Moscow.

Some examples. On October 15, 1973, at the height of the Arab-Israeli war, Senator William Fulbright, whom he describes as favoring "good relations with the Soviet Union as well as supporting the Arabs," came to him fresh from a classified Pentagon briefing to say that the Arab offensive against Israel had peaked and that Sadat would do well to seek an armistice before the Israelis launched their counter-offensive. Marshall Shulman, the Soviet expert at State under Jimmy Carter, leaked to Dobrynin the contents of a confidential cable from the Moscow Embassy. Paul Warnke, Carter's chief SALT negotiator, criticized his president in a private conversation as "too rash and eager to get too much done in too short a time without considering the interests of the other side." Gerald Ford, outraged by Senator Jackson's revelation of the confidential agreement with Moscow about Jewish emigration, asked Kissinger to convey to Brezhnev and Gromyko through Dobrynin that Jackson had behaved "like a swine."

Other Americans would advise him how to "handle" Reagan, whom he could never quite figure out. Donald Kendall, the head of Pepsico, was a particularly valuable source on this subject, informing Dobrynin that Alexander Haig, Reagan's first Secretary of State, did not favor Reagan's "provocative public statements against the Soviet Union," and repeating to him what Haig's successor, George Shultz, had told him in confidence about the "anti-Soviet ideologues" surrounding the president. In this, Shultz echoed Haig, who described Reagan's advisors as "ignoramuses and saboteurs." Vice president Bush complained to him about Reagan as well, bemoaning "the almost unimaginable ideas and prejudices he brought to the White House from his past." George Kennan urged Moscow to put Reagan on the defensive. And Armand Hammer related to Dobrynin the contents of a confidential memo to Reagan from Richard Allen, the national security adviser, shown to him by Nancy Reagan, warning the president about Hammer on suspicion that he maintained ties with the KGB.

So outrageous are some of these revelations that the reader may well wonder whether to trust Dobrynin. It is most unlikely, however, that he invented these stories; it would be too easy for those whom he quotes, most of them still alive, to deny or to disprove his accounts, and thus discredit him and his book. What, then, explains the remarkable indiscretions that Dobrynin recounts? At the surface, they expressed a desire to show off one's importance or to secure business advantages. Hammer, a notoriously vain man who had desperately and for a long time unsuccessfully tried to get a foot into the White House door, was flattered to be taken seriously; and the CEO of Pepsico had important commercial interests in the Soviet Union which Reagan's anti-communist policy could have jeopardized. But such an explanation does not account for the garrulousness of those who were genuinely prominent and powerful. They seem to have been primarily motivated by the fear that Moscow might misinterpret American policies, as well as its anti-communist rhetoric, as a threat to its security. They acted on the premise that the Soviet Union suffered from chronic "paranoia" induced by recurrent invasions and needed constant reassurance that Washington's bark was worse than its bite.

This tactic, even when it was well-intentioned, had two harmful consequences. It persuaded the Politburo that it had powerful allies in Washington who were capable of neutralizing any attempts at overt hostility, leaving the Soviet Union free to build up its military arsenals beyond any reasonable needs of defense and to engage in acts of aggression within its sphere of influence. And it opened the gates to Moscow's direct interference in American politics.

The most common instruments that were employed to this end were invitations to summits, which all presidents and presidential candidates (except for Reagan) seemed to crave. Dobrynin tells of his astonishment on Sunday, August 20, 1968, when, on receipt of an urgent cable from Moscow, and having arranged to meet Johnson in the evening to inform him of the impending invasion of Czechoslovakia, he found the president's mind focused on entirely different matters:

> President Johnson listened carefully, but apparently he did not immediately appreciate the significance of the news. Much to my surprise he did not react to it at all, just thanked me for the information.... He proceeded to another subject, on which he seemed much more keen. He said he was awaiting our response to his plans to announce his visit to the Soviet Union.... Still utterly oblivious of the impact of what was happening in Prague, Johnson asked us to give him a reply about his visit to Moscow ... no later than between 8 and 9 a.m.

According to Dobrynin, Moscow interpreted this indifference to its aggression as evidence that the West would not engage militarily on Warsaw Pact territory; and this was a judgment that a decade later "weighed in the balance" in the decision to invade Afghanistan.

Moscow well understood the nature of American electoral politics and the opportunities it offered to promote the fortunes of one or another candidate, depending on his attitude toward the Soviet Union. Sometimes it merely had to respond to solicitations from American politicians. Thus Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy's principal domestic advisor, requested Moscow through Dobrynin not to increase pressures on Berlin, because it would help the Republicans in the forthcoming congressional elections. McGeorge Bundy, Johnson's national security adviser, asked Dobrynin's government to show understanding if, in the course of Johnson's campaign against Goldwater, the president should say some things "that might displease the Soviet Union." (He added that Johnson, for his part, would not

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mind if Moscow criticized him "within reasonable limits.") When Humphrey was trailing in the polls against Nixon, owing to his identification with Johnson's war in Vietnam, Dean Rusk, Johnson's Secretary of State, informed Dobrynin that the United States had suspended the bombing of North Vietnam and hoped that Moscow would use its good offices to bring peace to Southeast Asia in order to help the Democratic candidate.

In January 1986, shortly after the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Geneva, Senator Edward Kennedy called on the Soviet ambassador to express his displeasure with the new chumminess between the two heads of state. Dobrynin thought that Kennedy took this unusual step because "the Democratic Party began to worry that it was being left high and dry by the joint peace offensive Gorbachev and Reagan had begun at their summit." Kennedy

> voiced some mild criticism of our policy toward Reagan: it had helped promote a sharp growth in Reagan's popularity in the United States, allayed American's concerns over the threat of nuclear confrontation, weakened the vigorous antiwar movement, and neutralized Reagan's opposition in Congress and in the nation as a whole.

Emboldened by such solicitations, Moscow sometimes took the initiative. The most brazen—and foolhardy—instance of such interference occurred in the presidential campaign of 1968. Determined at all costs to prevent the election of Nixon, whom it then regarded as an inveterate anti-communist, and ignoring its ambassador's objectives, Moscow secretly offered Humphrey "any conceivable aid in his election campaign—including financial aid." Humphrey had the good sense to reject the offer out of hand.

The cozy relationships established under Nixon and continued under Ford turned sour under Carter. Dobrynin minimizes the role of the invasion of Afghanistan in the collapse of détente, preferring to blame it on Carter's human rights campaign and the influence of Brzezinski. But the real rupture in relations occurred under Reagan. Dobrynin calls the five years he spent in Washington during the Reagan administration "the most difficult and unpleasant" of his ambassadorial career. True, he benefited from the support of the "pragmatists" in the Reagan administration, headed in his judgment by George Shultz, among whom he lists Nancy Reagan, Vice president Bush, Michael Deaver, James Baker and Robert McFarlane. They counter-balanced the "conservative" camp of Caspar Weinberger, William Clark, Edwin Meese, William Casey and Jeane Kirkpatrick. But this time the president declined to use "confidential channels" to Moscow, directing all relations through the Secretary of State, the first of whom, Haig, in a symbolic move, deprived the Soviet ambassador of his parking space in the Foggy Bottom garage. Things were different.

Reagan was the only American president to challenge not only Soviet behavior but the Soviet system itself, on the grounds that it was inherently aggressive and expansionist. This new attitude was not something that Moscow had expected. It threw the Soviet leadership into disarray: the Kremlin had been confidently following a policy, formulated by Gromyko in one of his position papers to the Politburo, that the objective of Soviet policy was to convince the Americans that it was hopeless and unprofitable to confront the Soviet Union. Reagan did not play by these rules. He refused to bow to nuclear blackmail, and he confronted Moscow by undertaking a vast military buildup, including a program of ballistic missile defenses, aggravating the challenge with stinging rhetoric.

Dobrynin admits to having been perplexed by Reagan's personality, for it seemed to be made up of contradictory elements. Of all the political figures he encountered in Washington, Reagan fitted least well the categories of "pragmatist" and "ideologue," being a bit of each. And yet Dobrynin learned to treat him with respect, concluding that Reagan was "much deeper" than he appeared, that he was underestimated by both opponents and experts. As Gorbachev was preparing for the Geneva summit, he told him

> that first impressions were important for Reagan and could be crucial for their further talks. It was important that Reagan see him first of all in human terms even when they disagreed profoundly. I advised him to use his own sense of humor and at the beginning not to rely too heavily on detailed knowledge of concrete subjects in order not to corner Reagan or embarrass him.

This was sound advice. On another occasion Dobrynin concluded that Reagan found it difficult to think and at the same time to assimilate the ideas of others, which was also true.

But the moral passion that animated the president eluded Dobrynin completely. He dismisses the crushing of Solidarity (which, along with Poland, rates no entry in the index) in a couple of paragraphs and implies that such a minor incident should not have affected U.S.-Soviet relations. Having attended all the National Security Council meetings which took

The Accordionist

These accordionists
just show up on the sidewalk
across from where you sit

at your bistro, a glass of wine,
a beautiful girl, a lovely man,
the night in Paris indigo and starry.

The accordionist—the accordionist
shows up and plays these melodies,
these tunes you almost recognize,

these tunes you suspect are for a wedding
on a hot July afternoon in the provinces,
the lavender in bloom, the bride smiling,

the groom sweating, the tables heavy
with pâté and cassoulet and Beaujolais on ice.
You're spinning round as you dance to this music

and lovely yes the lavender as you spin
and this accordionist plays on this indigo night
and sings with his eyes closed of the lavender

this accordionist on this indigo night in Paris
is before you rapping on the table
and holding a tray for your francs.

A tray the accordionist holds for the lavender
oh and the wedding dance and this night
this indigo night in Paris.

R. M. Ryan

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About those walking sticks...

On the left walking stick leans the Nobel laureate in literature, Isaac Bashevis Singer, the great Yiddish writer for the Jewish Forward. On the right one leans Seth Lipsky, who was then a member of the editorial board of the Wall Street Journal and who aspired to bring out the Forward in English. The date was August 1984. The editor had travelled to Mr. Singer's vacation spot at the Swiss Alpine village of Wengen to seek Mr. Singer's wisdom and support. They decided to take a walk. Mr. Lipsky suspected it might be the most important walk he ever took. So he slipped an instant camera into his pocket. Then they picked up those walking sticks from a barrel in the hotel lobby and set out.

The walk lasted hours. Mr. Singer talked of the Talmud and Mark Twain and of his love of the Yiddish language. They shared their appreciation of humor and irony. They talked of the crisis in Jewish continuity. Finally Mr. Lipsky poured out his hopes for bringing the Forward out in English for a new generation of American Jews. As they were headed down the mountain, Mr. Lipsky reached into his pocket, retrieved the camera and passed it to a tourist strolling in the other direction. Mr. Lipsky took Mr. Singer by the arm and said, "Mr. Singer, please turn around." The great writer turned and looked back toward the mountains. Click. The shutter sealed the moment. Then Mr. Singer leaned over to his young visitor and told him that if he was going to become editor of the Forward he would have to remember, when he was getting his picture taken, to remove his sun glasses.

Today, the Forward is celebrating its fifth anniversary in English and is one of the fastest growing newspapers in America. "Just as Jews remade themselves from immigrants to Americans over the last 100 years," writes the Los Angeles Times, "the Forward that everyone read in Yiddish at the beginning of this century has transformed itself into the Forward that increasing numbers of Jews are reading in English at the end of this century." Send us the coupon below, and we will send you a trial subscription of four weekly issues of the Forward *absolutely free.* Then we'll send you a bill. If you do not wish to continue, simply write "cancel" on the bill and send it back. There will be no charge and no obligation. If you'd like to continue, just pay the bill of $34.46, and we'll send you an additional 52 weekly issues of the Forward. Incidentally, the walking sticks are back at the hotel. But if you would like a souvenir from Wengen, we'll be glad to send you a handsome reproduction of the photo to welcome you to the Forward family.

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place in the weeks that followed this "incident," I can testify that in the privacy of the Cabinet Room the president delivered himself of passionate oratory in which he compared the Soviet-directed action to Hitler's aggressions in the late 1930's. This was not done for show. It stemmed from principle.

Reagan opposed the Soviet Union for moral reasons; but he also made efforts for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union for moral reasons. It was this moral standpoint that eluded the grasp of a diplomat for whom "morality" is a word that has no place in the vocabulary of politics. The moment Reagan began to feel fresh currents in Moscow in 1985-86, he softened his rhetoric and then moved toward détente, a genuine détente based not on the fear of nuclear confrontation but on shared values. Dobrynin does not quite give Reagan the credit for the change which ended the cold war, preferring to attribute it to a shift in the president's psychology; but this, too, demonstrates the shallowness of his thinking.

The limitations of the personal approach to diplomacy are most evident in Dobrynin's helplessness when he tries to deal with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Blind to deeper causes, he reduces this extraordinary event to individual blunders. He emphatically denies that Reagan's pressures, especially in the realm of military technology, had anything to do with the Soviet Union's breakdown. The true cause, according to Dobrynin, lay in the mistakes committed by Gorbachev and his associates. Alexander Yakovlev was the "evil mastermind" who persuaded Gorbachev to destroy the party structure on which his power rested. The weaker Gorbachev felt, the more unilateral concessions he had to make to the West in quest of assistance to buttress his disintegrating power base.

Dobrynin makes some cryptic remarks about Gorbachev seeking both financial and moral support from the United States in 1990, adding that the aid, which was promised at the Malta summit, never materialized. These allusions may explain Bush's unfortunate address in Kiev in August 1991, in which he urged the Ukrainians not to seek statehood. Dobrynin further suggests that Gorbachev's Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, consented to the Soviet withdrawal from Eastern Europe and to the breakup of the Soviet Union because deep in his heart he had always wanted "independence for his native Georgia and to be head of that country."

Such reasoning is utterly unconvincing. It is a most superficial explanation for the fall of a regime which Dobrynin had served so long and so faithfully. He calls the fall of the Soviet Union "tragic," and yet he hails it as the end of the "grand expectations and illusions" fostered by the Soviet Union's "incompetent but highly ambitious leaders." The intellectual schizophrenia of this high functionary of a superpower in a state of advanced decay is evident throughout his recollections.

RICHARD PIPES is the author most recently of *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (Knopf).

Back To The Past

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

Allan Greenberg: Selected Works

(Academy Editions, 128 pp., $38)

When the National Gallery of Art opened in Washington in 1941, the response was mixed at best. A handful of critics reacted with awe to John Russell Pope's lavish and cold palace of marble, but what passed for the more sophisticated judgment of the time dismissed such praise as the bleatings of sycophants of Pope and his Medici, Andrew Mellon. Real architects knew better, after all, than to put immense Ionic colonnades on the fronts of their buildings. *The Architects' Journal* in London, for example, did not hesitate to damn the whole enterprise as a tired irrelevancy. "Within a decade," the magazine predicted, the National Gallery would "be regarded as the apotheosis, and the end, of an architectural outlook and endeavour which have had immense influence in this country, as in the U.S.A., for nearly 75 years ... the architects of both countries will realize that along this road one can go no further.... If, therefore, the National Gallery of Art seems insipid, even lifeless, it is because time has carried architects past Neo-Classic and nothing will ever bring it to life again."

By 1941, a building such as the National Gallery was determinedly, even proudly, *retardataire*. By the time it was finished, Philip Goodwin and Edward Durell Stone's sleek, International Style box for the Museum of Modern Art in New York was already two years old, Rockefeller Center had been around for five years and the glass skyscraper of the United Nations Secretariat Building, which was to become the ultimate symbol of postwar modernity, was but a few years away. Modern architecture was clearly the rising stock. John Russell Pope may have thought marble columns made sense in the middle of the twentieth century, but as for everyone else it was time to get with the program.

So why is it, then, that half a century later, classicism seems not only alive in contemporary architecture, but the favored style of whole clusters of architects, many so young that the National Gallery is, for them, as ancient a piece of American architectural history as Monticello? In certain serious architectural circles today, columns and entablatures and pediments and moldings are not relics of the past at all, but quite a bit more au courant than any glass curtain wall. In a stunning inversion of the history of taste, modernism is the Academy and classicism is the upstart.

The new classicists, whom *The New York Times* hailed last winter as "architecture's young old fogies" represent an international phenomenon, but the overwhelming majority of them are in Britain and the United States. They come in several varieties, from the doctrinaire to the casual, from those for whom classical architecture is a moral cause to be pursued with the intensity of a religious crusade to those for whom classical architecture is an appealingly decorative style, mainly useful for hooking rich and conservative clients. (It often seems as if the youngest are the most dogmatic and the least willing to admit anything other than the legacy of Greece and Rome to their private architectural pantheons.) But what all of these new classicists have in common is an indifference to modernist architecture, at least so far as it affects what comes off their own drawing boards, and a profound belief that the cataclysmic aesthetic revolution of the twentieth century somehow got it wrong.

By now everyone knows about Prince Charles's vendetta against modern architecture in Britain, which not only made him the most famous architecture critic in the world but led to the creation of the

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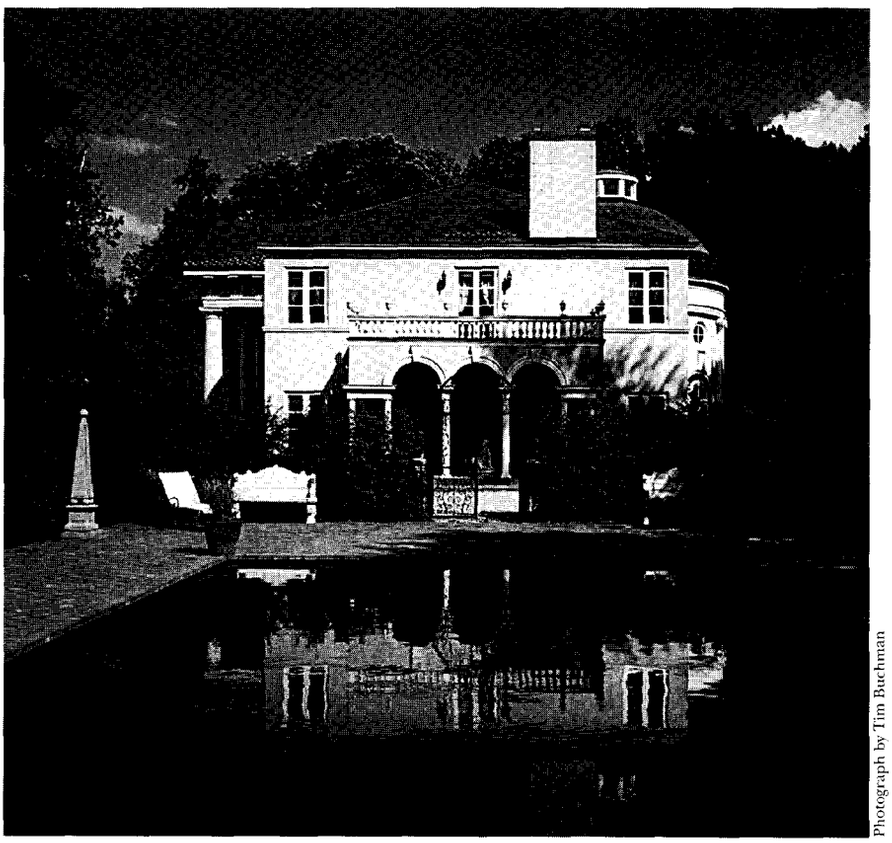
Prince of Wales Architecture Institute, where classical styles are taught and a considerable (and welcome) emphasis is placed on the value of achieving harmony among buildings that sit together on a street. And classicism has completely taken over one venerable architecture school, that of the University of Notre Dame, which Thomas Gordon Smith, a 47-year-old architect who has been chairman since 1989, has remade into a strict Beaux-Arts academy in which there is but one right way to make buildings. Smith and his colleagues not only teach in the university but, like the modernist architects of half a century ago, struggle to express their ideas in built form in the only way they can afford, which is by building houses for themselves. South Bend, Indiana, has two notable new classical houses: Smith's own residence, a large, somewhat bombastic brick villa with hand-painted frescoes and a palette of bright colors à la Grecque; and the residence of a junior faculty member, Duncan Stroik, grandiosely named "Villa Indiana," an exquisite small pavilion with a barrel-vaulted central room and a gentle, almost Jeffersonian air.



Photograph by Tim Buchman

ALLAN GREENBERG, *HUCKLEBERRY HOUSE*, NEW ENGLAND, 1982-1985

For all their erudition, there is an undercurrent of *vox populi, vox dei* to the argument of many of these classicists, and most of them have not quite figured out whether they are more comfortable banging the drum of populism or viewing their architecture as the ultimate expression of elitism. Often they try to have it both ways, claiming that classicism is what most people like, but sneering at the cheap versions of it produced by commercial builders—those mass-produced, Doric-templed tract houses and suburban banks that for so long have represented a diaspora of classicism.

They're at least half right: modern architecture has never been very popular in this country, except with architects. Modern buildings are all over the commercial landscape, but even in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the years when modernism held the greatest sway over American architecture, most new buildings were still relatively traditional. This is even more the case today, as the revival of the Shingle Style fills the well-to-do suburbs and resort communities of the East Coast and replicated Spanish Colonial or Mediterranean villas pop up all over the South and West. We tend to leave modern architecture to those places in which the primary concern is the making of money—skyscrapers, commercial buildings, shopping centers—while traditional styles, at least for most people, are saved for the places we seek a deeper emotional connection with. It cannot be an accident that most upscale hotels, whatever their exterior architecture, are decorated with ornate moldings and factory-made pseudo-antique furniture inside; thus do they announce their good breeding and inspire confidence among their guests.

Most of this standard, cookie-cutter classicism is awful—banal at best, vulgar at worst. The young classicists don't quarrel with this judgment; in fact, they often use it to support the validity of what they are doing, arguing that classical architecture is a high art requiring special education and training, and that it shouldn't be left to second-rate architects and ignorant builders. Fair enough. There is plenty of difference between the highly literate architecture of, say, Scott Merrill in the United States or Quinlan Terry in England and the schlocky fake-Georgian moldings that are plastered on a concrete-block five-plex to make it seem like an elegant theater.

Yet there is still something more than a little disingenuous about the attempt, even on the part of the most serious of the new generation of classicists, to impose a "correct" way of making architecture on a culture that, whatever else can be said about it, remains highly resistant to any form of aesthetic, not to say moral, authority. To many of these architects, classicism is a way out of chaos, a reminder of an ordered world gone by, and they design classical buildings in the hope of reasserting classicism's authority. Yes, there is order, these colonnaded courthouses and pedimented banks seem to say; it is the order you remember, and if you build me, it will come again.

You can't argue with some of this. It is certainly a lot easier to live with than the rationale of the group of architects who can be thought of as the new classicists' adversaries, the Deconstructivists, who argue that society is difficult and fragmented and disconnected, and so buildings should be, too. No Deconstructivist architect has yet proven successfully that the expression of chaos in architectural form offers any particular enlightenment as to the nature of society—or why, even if it could confer such understanding, it would be worth waking up in the middle of it every morning.

The Deconstructivist architects, like the modernists before them, have one powerful weapon at their disposal: the appeal of the new, the ability to claim that their work is different, original and expressive of the spirit of the age. Classicists struggle mightily with the monster that this argument represents, for nothing is as insulting to a creative artist as being rejected for being unoriginal; the insults hurled at the National Gallery of Art fifty-four years ago are sent just as often today in the direction of the young classical architects. The more dogmatic of them will stand up and blather on about how

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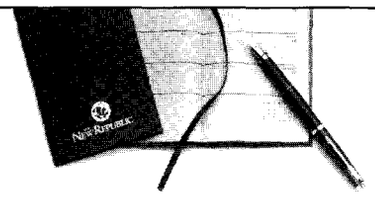

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none of this matters, how true originality is a myth, impossible to achieve and also meaningless. Indeed, Donald M. Rattner, director of the New York Institute for the Study of Classical Architecture, has suggested that the choice of classicism is a sign of maturity for a young architect, for it implies an ability to rise above the trends of the moment, and to resist the siren call of fashion. "Deference to one's forebears and to tradition as a whole [is not] known to be among youth's chief virtues," Rattner has written, "and yet we find that classical architects must, ipso facto, defer and refer to the achievements of previous generations, as they seek to extend those achievements into the present."

True enough. And yet, for all their earnestness, there is something a little sad in these lines, which sound all too much like the rhetoric of those undergraduate conservatives who, for all their passion, seem like tired, 60-year-old men. "The classical ethos holds novelty for its own sake to be a rather trivial pursuit, for it is understood that in the realm of aesthetics what is new is not necessarily good, and what is good is not necessarily new," Rattner declares, putting artistic originality more or less in the category of the sexual urgings of the novitiate who proudly puts such earthly impulses aside in pursuit of higher things. I can't argue with the view that a constant striving for originality has brought more foolishness than wisdom to architecture, and conferred an air of desperation that is of little lasting benefit to the profession. But isn't that something every architect should discover for himself or herself? Why should an architect, at the very beginning of his or her career, care so passionately about order, and be so determined to honor the past above his own creative impulses, and be so sure that in returning to the style of the ancients, he has found the Holy Grail?

Not the least of the appeal of Allan Greenberg, the 56-year-old architect who has been something of a standard-bearer for the new generation of classicists, is his reluctance to present his architecture as a prototype for a remade world. Greenberg, South African by birth and educated at Yale, has produced a body of work remarkable for its quality and for its refusal to adhere to any ideological dogma. He is a classicist through and through—in some ways the most skillful, and surely the most thoughtful, classical architect practicing in the world today—yet he has a remarkable ability to transcend the doctrinaire cant that has so affected many of his colleagues.

His work is nicely presented in a new monograph, and it offers a refreshing contrast to the tone of so much writing about classical architecture today. Greenberg is best known for several major houses on the East coast and the elaborate classical interiors he has designed for the State Department in Washington. He approaches classicism as a language more than as a catechism, and he struggles in his work to establish a relationship between classical architecture and democracy. Very much in the tradition of Jefferson, he sees it as a natural expression of the American spirit:

> While government may use any architecture for noble or ignoble purposes, I maintain that classical architecture is still the most potent, the most appropriate and the most noble language to express the relationship of the individual to the community in a Republican democracy. The *Federalist Papers* discuss the 2,500-year struggle to attain a just balance between individual and state power that culminated in the U.S. Constitution. Classical architecture's unusual capacity to express this balance, sometimes tension, is evident in the nation's most evocative public buildings.

Many of Greenberg's works could have been designed by other members of the fraternity of new classicists, many of whom were trained in his office; but increasingly his inventions stand out for a willingness to push the borders of classical design. As Mies van der Rohe was a far more inventive architect than the Miesian acolytes who followed him, Greenberg is, at heart, a creative designer, a man for whom classicism is less a set of rules than an invitation to imagination. Thus, he devises his own variations on classical details and, more important, he designs with a clear understanding of certain fundamentals of mass, proportion and texture. He is finding himself in the highest traditions of eclecticism, which takes him somewhat away from the high church of pure classicism.

With occasional exceptions, such as a vast house in Greenwich, Connecticut, that is an overblown takeoff on Mount Vernon, Greenberg's work eschews precise historical models. More typical of his best work is a house of mahogany and fieldstone now nearing completion, also in Greenwich, that weaves together elements from several architectural traditions, including the sprawling Shingle Style, and has certain aspects that are striking as pure geometry. From time to time his details are overscaled; in other situations his buildings may seem oddly severe, and a few of them can be intensely active, as if he wanted to see how busy a façade could be made to be without losing the essential virtue of serenity. Yet rarely do his

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designs want for fresh air; if there is anything that distinguishes his work from that of many of the other new classicists, it is that Greenberg's buildings seem not like hothouse orchids, but like organic objects, pushed and pulled into the real world.

I probably exaggerate the difference between Greenberg and many of the classical acolytes, since their end product is not, in the final analysis, always so different from his, particularly to laymen's eyes. I do so partly because I so admire the way in which Greenberg stands for the fundamentals of architectural space and form, and I worry that many of the other classicists stand first for rules and dogma. Greenberg's hero is Sir Edwin Lutyens, the English architect who could do with the language of classicism what Shakespeare could do with a sonnet, and I fear that many of the younger generation of classicists secretly prefer Sir Herbert Baker, Lutyens's dull, by-the-book rival, whose architecture was always proper, always dignified, and possessed everything any building could want except the spark of genius.

The spiritual father of the current classical revival is probably Henry Hope Reed, who has been fighting modern architecture for two generations, and who has given the movement much of its narrowminded, polemical tone. Reed rejects all modern buildings for the silliest possible reason, that they have no ornament; and so he consigns the Seagram Building and Fallingwater to the same aesthetic dustbin as the World Trade Center and Levittown. In Greenberg, by contrast, the new classicists have a vastly more cultivated leader, one who comes to classicism not because of columns and cartouches, but because of its symbolism, and who sees late-twentieth-century classicism as inevitably influenced by the experience of the modern world.

What makes this time altogether different from the day when the National Gallery raised high the banner of the rear guard is that modern architecture, at least as that term was understood in 1941, has largely played itself out. It is no longer full of promise; its legacy is, rather, a history of promises unfulfilled, of cities desolated, of utopian dreams turned into corporate sterility. The new classicists take a certain perverse pleasure in this, though they tend, as all polemicists do, to overestimate the strength of the enemy, and to see modern architecture as more potent today than it really is. Modernism's collapse as a vital force in contemporary culture is one of the things that has enabled the new classicists to be as widespread and as prolific as they are, though few of them are comfortable acknowledging this, or even admitting that modernism is not the force it once was. Those who stake claim to aesthetic absolutes need adversaries, and modernism remains, for many of the new classicists, the adversary made in heaven, a necessary dragon in that it appears to represent the absolute opposite of every classical value: preferring novelty over permanence, machinery over humanity.

Never mind that the origins of modern architecture lie in utopian socialism, and that the style is now nearly as completely a part of history as Neo-Gothic. Sadly, most of the new classicists not only overestimate the enemy, they also misread the enemy, and deny the great aesthetic power that modernism at its best could have. And here, again, Greenberg is an exception. He is one of the few classicists who appreciate Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, even though he himself chooses to design differently.

The one area in which the new classicists are completely right is in their view that modernism utterly failed to create a workable vernacular, an architectural language out of which whole cities rather than individual aesthetic objects might be made. There are many great modern buildings, but there are almost no great modern streets, modern places, modern cities. But the classical language, even when used in an ordinary commercial milieu, can yield a decent street. Routine classical buildings thrown together become Park Avenue, while routine modern ones yield Third Avenue or K Street or La Défense, places with no sense of urbanism to them at all.

Donald Rattner has observed that "classicism prompts us to subordinate our individualism to the greater good of the collective by adopting artistic conventions not entirely of our own making, so that architecture can communicate not just to our private selves but to others now and in the future." This nicely sums up what is perhaps classicism's greatest gift to this moment in architecture: the ability to convey a sense of wholeness, a sense of continuity, over space and time; and a sympathy to those qualities of connection between buildings that we think of as urbanism. The challenge for the new classicists will be not to make handsome and learned buildings—this they surely can do—but to use the architectural heritage they value to create real places, and thereby conquer not the imagined evils of modern architecture, but the real ones.

PAUL GOLDBERGER is chief cultural correspondent of *The New York Times*.

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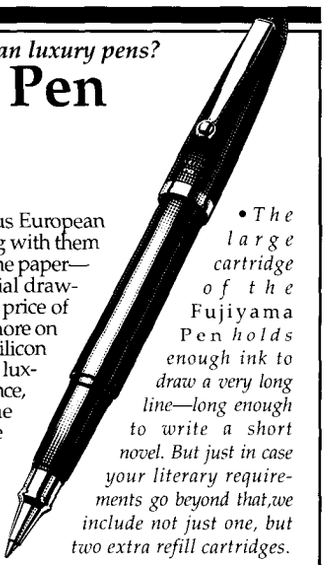

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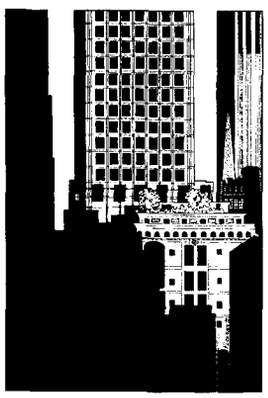
NEW YORK DIARIST

Pine-Sol

EVERY GENERATION OR SO, ONE OF my kin has succumbed to a wicked vagary, and dragged her brood to some distant Promised Land. As far as I can tell, each of these monumental transoceanic voyages was undertaken for some bafflingly prosaic reason. When I ask my mother why she left Israel, a move which drastically altered our lives forever, she says, "We couldn't find an apartment." Or, "Your father hated his job." My grandmother is even more laconic. She left Aden, a British port colony on the coast of Yemen, in 1930, twenty years before other Jews from Arab countries began fleeing into Israel. There was no potato famine; they probably hadn't yet heard of Hitler; and she was a little wary of those "Commies," as she calls the Zionist founding fathers. When I press her, she thinks for a moment, then offers: "Someone broke into our store."

FOR MY PARENTS, THE AMERICAN dream began and then quickly dimmed in Briarwood, a small hamlet in Queens at the western tip of Jamaica. Briarwood's natural limits are the sky and the Maple Grove Cemetery, which runs for miles and ends cheerfully at Hatfield's, the town's only gay bar. I have never read the tombstones there, but I imagine them to warn "LEAVE NOW OR DIE HERE," the motto that best describes Briarwood's role as an immigrant holding pen. Early on came the Russians and Eastern Europeans, mostly Jewish working class, attracted by Queens' flickering moment of glory after the 1964 World's Fair. They soon realized Briarwood would never be Brooklyn Heights and clawed their way out to Westchester. Those who stayed behind fell to petty culture wars with the newcomers. The latest skirmish is between my mother and our downstairs neighbors, a family who just moved here from India. The Indians complain that my parents are loud and move furniture at midnight. My mother can't stand the smell of curry, so sometimes at dinnertime she leaves a bottle of Pine-Sol at their doorstep.

EVEN NOW, HOWEVER, THERE IS one thing that binds the stragglers together: fear of the rest of Jamaica. Old timers from Briarwood speak of an onslaught from the East, as if cold war armies had snuck in at midnight and pillaged property values. Each one has a different way of expressing the feeling of siege, depending on his profession. For Raj, of Raj's Stationery, it means nobody buys *The New York Times* anymore. Tony, of Tony's Shoe Repair, sees it another way. "The people here used to buy $200 shoes, so paying $20 to repair them was no big deal," he recently told me, wearily hammering what was probably his eight-millionth tap onto a pair of red leather heels. "Now, they buy $20 shoes." As he slammed in the last nail, the heel snapped off.



FOR MOST OF THE neighborhood, the war was lost on Hillside Avenue, ten years ago, on the day the local Car Wash was unveiled. The garish monstrosity is shaped like a three-ring circus, with a mural of neon trapeze girls sailing over the heads of dopey elephants. Cars drive through a tiger's mouth into the wash and, one block later, exit out a hula hoop. When I was young I liked it. But for my mother, it represented the death of civility, and its big brushes spurt out not soap, but grimy dirt that spatters across the street onto the newly built Jet Motor Inn, which sells rooms by the hour.

I CONFESS, THIS CIRCUS FIXATION has affected me. Eastern Jamaica has always seemed staged and slightly unreal, like a Spike Lee set. When I was young it was forbidden territory, that place on the other side of the schoolyard where I wasn't allowed to go, although most of my classmates went home there. Now I drive through and look out the window and see, in slow motion, a boy with braided hair popping wheelies, a group of men hanging out at some unmarked hole, dozens of shanty churches. Once I went to the cemetery where Jamaica's founders are buried, a weed-choked lot where overturned headstones lie beside crack vials and bottles of bleach. I came upon the tombstone of Benjamin Cleech, 1824-1896:

> SINCE JESUS HATH SLEPT IN THE TOMB
> OF WHAT HAVE GOD'S CHILDREN TO BEAR
> CHRIST'S PRESENCE WILL BANISH GLOOM
> HIS ROD AND STAFF WILL BE NEAR

And I imagined it superimposed, ironically, over the closing scene of *Crooklyn*.

LATELY, THOUGH, THINGS ARE looking up for Briarwood. In synagogue one day last year, I wandered upstairs and found myself on a different continent. A gaggle of thick-ankled ladies, their stocky frames bundled in woolen shawls, huddled behind the partition clucking some foreign tongue. I tried to start a conversation with a dozen blank faces until finally one smiled and said, "We are from Bukhara." I have since found out that thousands of Bukharans, if that's what they're called, have dragged their brood to Briarwood. Now the new Russian Bakery does battle with the 99-cent store for the soul of the neighborhood, and we know who the locals root for. For a few years at least, the dream has been revived, although in dimmer form: someday, the locals say, we may be like Rego Park, that mecca to the north, where store shelves overflow with Romanian jam and Georgian bran flakes, and all the women wear fur.

THOUGH I SHARE MY neighbors' happiness, one question nags me. Why Briarwood? How does half a Russian village collectively decide on some tiny spot in Queens? Do they close their eyes and spin the globe? Surely they never sent an emissary, because then he would have called back and said, "Misha. No century-old stone monasteries. No beautiful blue-tiled mosques. No silk bazaars. Only rows and rows of six-story brick buildings. And Raj's Stationery. Stay there. I'm coming home."

THIS YEAR, I PAID A VISIT TO THE synagogue to inquire, hoping their English had improved. Outside, little Sasha and Michal and Eli were wrestling on the front steps. "He wants to marry you," sang one as I approached. "Shut up," wailed another, punching. I asked each one how their parents had decided on Briarwood, and got a dizzying litany of relations: "Mama's aunt was here," or, "My father's sister's husband had a store here." I gave up keeping track and asked them if they liked Briarwood. I expected the boys to spew grim tales of gunshots and drugs at my old school. Instead, I got this: "Last week, my cousin Natasha came here, and she lives in Brooklyn, and she says in Brooklyn there are no trees and plants, only blank sidewalks and subways, but in Briarwood there are lots of trees, and she wants to move to Briarwood. We love Briarwood." Be still my heart.

HANNA ROSIN

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